THE
WHITE SLAVE;

OR,

THE RUSSIAN PEASANT GIRL.

VOL. II.

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BY THE AUTHOR OF

"REVELATIONS IN RUSSIA."

VOL. II.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE WHITE SLAVE.

CHAPTER I.

When Count Horace stepped out on to the quay, though not an hour past midnight, he stood in the broad light of day. There is something very strange to the unaccustomed eye in its bright yet frigid glare, when all the noises of the bustling busy day are hushed in silence and in sleep, leaving the stillness of the deepest night amidst the daylight. There is something still more strange in the lifeless and deserted streets, which make a living city appear a city of the dead. The very rattling of a distant car is startling, and no less so the few occasional notes of an awakened bird which sink again into silence,

for it will be readily understood that where the night lasts only an hour, the birds cannot watch and sing till its shadows close, nor begin their song with the first blush of morning.

Amidst other carriages, the Count's droshky was waiting for him at the door. It would be superfluous to describe a vehicle so well known as the national droshky; a sort of narrow cushion-covered bench, supported on four wheels and springs, on one end of which the rider sits astride, his back supported by a slight elevation and his feet resting on a sort of step on each side of the vehicle, protected from the mud by a semi-circular splashing board of leather; the coachman, with his back to his master, driving from the opposite extremity. It would be almost superfluous to describe the old national droshky, if the caprice of fashion were not fast rendering it obsolete and consigning it to the stands where the *Isvostchicks* ply for hire. It is giving way to a car-shaped vehicle, in the construction of which picturesqueness has been sacrificed to convenience, and which might pass, in London streets, for one of the numerous hybrids, which coach-builders with less taste than fancy are daily

calling into existence to be drawn by ponies "under duty size."

But the Prince's was still the old national droshky, looking half horse, half vehicle, driven by a coachman with a bushy beard as black as jet, dressed in an ample caftan of the palest sky-blue, trimmed with silver, and fastened with a sash of deep lilac silk, interwoven with a silver net, and with the low crowned beaver hat, which, in summer, supersedes the quadrangular winter cap of velvet.

Two sleek and glossy-coated horses were harnessed to it: the one, a heavy black trotter of the Orloff breed, in the shafts, which were kept apart by the famous bow of birch wood, to which the bearing rein is fastened; the other a light well-bred hack, of the same colour, with very long tail and mane, from the stud of Kourakin. He was attached "*pristascha*," or on the near side, with traces to a bar, his neck strapped down as low as it would bend.

The Count was no sooner seated than, on the given signal "*stupai!* drive on," his coachman started, holding a rein in each hand, and bearing on the snaffle with which alone the Russian coachmen drive. The Orloff trotter dashed

along at a trot of inconceivable speed; the *pris-tascha*, with its neck cruelly borne down and its long mane almost trailing the ground, galloping with all its speed to keep up with it. Though all the marvellous stories of the speed and endurance of Russian horses on the road have been an imposition on ignorance, it must be admitted that there are no street vehicles in the world which go or can go at the speed of sledge or droshky, drawn by an Orloff trotter, whose pace is wonderful for a short distance.

"*Praveya! praveya!*" shouted the coachman as a warning when a solitary *talega* or cart, laden with vegetables, came across them, and away dashed the horses; at every corner a police watchman leaning on his axe peeping out from his tricolor striped watch-box, in hopes that the rattling pace which disturbed the decorum of the streets, was that of runaway horses, in which case, if he could secure them, the horses are confiscated, the coachman flogged, and made a soldier, and himself munificently rewarded by the police-major of his quarter—perhaps even with an eighty kopek piece, equivalent to nearly eight-pence.

But as he turned the corner of the Winter

Palace, he came up with another droshky, drawn by two little dun-coloured horses of Kazan, wiry and shaggy-maned, and almost camel-like in their ungraceful angularity of outline. The poet and the young lieutenant Alexius were just alighting from the vehicle. The former made a sign to Count Horace to stop, who thereupon called out to his coachman to that effect; for he had seen enough this evening to understand that the favoured child of the Muses was in other respects a privileged individual.

"So!" said the poet, "do we meet again so soon? Come with us; we are going to wander about the islands, and to breakfast at the ferry on the Krestofsky island."

"I was going to bed," replied Horace; "but the beauty of the early daylight wooes me—the thought of a refreshing ramble tempts me, and the prospect of such company renders your proposition irresistible."

"That is right—rest if you will with the declining sun; but it is hardly in the rosy arms of morning that you should seek repose. This is the long day of Nature—she sleeps the other half the year. So now we will watch her wide awake, whilst man is sleeping—her whose sleep

man's busy hum disturbs so often, when, during her long night of winter, she seems just roused by his restless importunity, to open her drowsy eyes for a few hours."

"I am told," said Horace, "that your winter is full of grandeur, and I see that your summer is full of beauty:—you must find inspiration in both."

"We need not seek inspiration in our solemn winter, when our pine forests frown in dark relief on the shroud of snow, when the Heavens seem to borrow their light from the earth as the inky sky refracts its cold whiteness; or where it overspreads our treeless steppes so boundless, so monotonous, so drear, as to image more vividly than even your boasted ever-changing ocean, time, space, and eternity. We need not seek it in our summer, which you see indeed with all its graces; but still without the charm which five months' sullen winter give it in our Russian eyes. There are other deeper, more soul-stirring sources, from which we might drink it in incessantly. I mean the only fertile source of true poetic inspiration, a bruised and wounded spirit, whether in nations or in individuals; that which in the lays of Pe-

trarch and the poesy of Byron charms so magically; that which gave its touching sweetness to the Psalmist's verse, and, breathing through the plaintive wail of captive Israel, strikes a responsive fibre in every heart that feels and suffers—and who is there that feels, who does not suffer?"

"But is it," said Horace, "quite true, that sorrow is the only or indeed the deepest source of poetic inspiration? What do you say to Homer, and to Dante, and to Milton, and to Shakespeare?"

"These," returned the poet, "are not poets, but famous dramatists. They terrify, astonish, paint, and please according to their mighty art, whose object is to shake or soothe, or by heroic emulation rouse the human heart to action; but not detaching it from things of every day to raise it in indefinite aspirations, but not to probe its inmost depth and wring its utmost sensibilities with its searching pathos. This is a mission left to music and to poetry."

"At least," returned Horace, "I hope that you find no such inspiration nationally, as a Muscovite, a leaf as it were of the only independent branch of the Sclavonic tree, one

thriving and triumphant in its vigour and over-shadowing races. I trust that the successful author, his sovereign's and his country's pride, has found none as a man."

"None as a man," repeated the poet sardonically, and looking over the parapet of the bridge of boats into the river, he lapsed into a moody silence.

"At least do not think," said the Lieutenant Alexius, "that our friend has sung to an ungrateful country. The laurel and the myrtle have wreathed his brows alike, and I for one can hardly conceive what can be wanting to the felicity of the happy lover and of the appreciated genius, whose lays like those of Orpheus, have even charmed the sternness of authority into leaving him tongue-free, where all around him are tongue-tied."

"And is not this forbearance humiliating?" observed the poet bitterly, "when we consider how the human arbiter of our fate regards it. 'I will have,' he says, 'caged animals in my menagerie of Peterhoff; I will have specimens of the wolf, the lynx, and the bear, although I set a price upon the heads of their wild, free brethren; I will let them howl and gnash their

teeth harmlessly through their prison bars. I will keep an untamed poet, only one, the censorship shall restrain and cramp his pen, as the gratings do the animals, and then scorning the dangers of an individual's tongue, he may talk freely. What, when I have Circassian guards, I should allow them to wear their characteristic shirts of mail and yataghans; and when I have a poet he should not be in character? No, let him talk freely, if he dares say much who will dare listen to much, and who will not admire the magnanimity of the lion, who does not crush the pismire? So let the poet talk, though I will have but one.' Oh, gentlemen! the prison of the great Torquato was preferable to this contemptuous and false forbearance, which, drawing from the wing of thought the pinion feathers which should have borne it far and wide, says to the maimed bird, 'Go! now crawl and flutter in the dust!' Torquato Tasso's dungeon bars shewed to the world that he was dreaded; and, whilst his body withered in his chains, his spirit soared abroad and free:—but can you not conceive a converse fate more terrible? The body and the tongue left in contemptuous liberty, whilst the spirit pines without the hope of ever finding outlet.

Think what it is to have speech free, when those around you dare not listen, or if they heard dared even less repeat. Think what it is to feel, when full of burning thoughts and glowing words, and daring, that might brave the martyrdom of persecution for one draught of immortality, to feel that one cannot give them the birth of publicity, even if contented that they should recoil and crush their author. No, there the censor sits inexorable as fate, and strangles them in child-birth."

"It must be difficult," thought Horace aside, "for any government to please these poetasters."

"But you," observed Alexius, "have had at least your share of glorious persecution."

"That," replied the poet, "was formerly, before I was a chosen specimen of my class. The very wolf now fed in the menagerie would have been knocked on the head and skinned, when not required to complete a collection. But let us change the theme. Like the plague-stricken, if I am not afraid of taking the plague, I may still impart it. I have digressed when I meant simply to say, in answer to your observation, that we need not seek our inspirations in our clime or scenery; though we have deserts where the

wrecks of nations roam; mountains, and mighty rivers, and regions where the white bear gnaws the frozen flesh of the antediluvian mammoth, still embedded in its everlasting ice."

"I believe," interrupted Horace, "that your history, if it does not chronicle a very distant period, still records those inspiring glories on which nations love to dwell. Your freedom conquered from the ruthless Tartar, the wondrous changes under your great Reformer, of which this capital around us—raised like Aladdin's palace—is itself a monument; and then these great events must be full of episodes, pregnant with matter for the dramatist and poet."

"You talk," replied the bard, "of the great events of our history, and of the monuments which mark them. What were the glories of Assuerus, Semiramis, or Sesostris, to the slaves who fought and fell to achieve their victories? What are the massive Pyramids, but landmarks which perpetuate the slavery of those who reared their giant piles? As for dramatic episodes and tragic matter, we have had, we have them now. Why should we dive into the past to seek them? Unless we hold, with the classic

and anti-Shakespearian unitarians, who never lay aside the rigid mask, that Time covers and hides the common-place and the prosaic, and that the prosaic and the common place are fatal to their art. None think, they say, beneath the dignity of toga or of corslet or remote costume, of Cæsar wanting a pocket-handkerchief, of heroes of the iron age whose only shirts were shirts of mail, or of the stern Elizabeth and amorous Mary, breaking their morning fast with rounds of beef and beakers full of potent ale.

"But then your audience expected from actors in such solemn stately guise tragic deeds and sonorous speeches, which, when forthcoming, only wearied them, although they would have gathered with breathless interest round the ladder from which a bricklayer's labourer had fallen with his hod. In real life the tragic startles and strikes, just from its contrast with that common-place which people avoid.

"If we turn to a scene of your revolution, the scaffold with its hungry knife gapes for a fair dishevelled victim, and the sight is awful; but how much is not its terror heightened, when the coarse jest of the besotted headsman is ut-

tered, as, stained with blood and wine, he greases the expectant steel with a candle-end, stolen as he boasts from his wine shop; and, when passing his red fingers through the lady's hair, he says with brutal pleasantry, 'Think, citizen, that they are roses.' The victim shrieks, and all whom wine or long oppression have not brutalized feel their blood curdle.

"But when the weary guillotine has played so many weeks, that the children have become accustomed to see the gutters run with blood, death, from being an incessant theme, becomes common-place. Then timid, aged gentlewomen who were wont to faint and call for smelling salts, mount the scaffold with unfaltering step, and not unfrequently turn round before they die to utter their last witticism. The harrowing contrast of the common place and the terrible, we have more strongly in the most recent dramas, and these are working out whereever there are men, in all society; and not the less in ours because the despot and the favourite, and the lord-slave and his bondsman, hustle each other. Believe me, strange plots are weaving and eventful tragedies proceeding hourly before our eyes. In plain prosaic life, we gaze uncon-

sciously upon the scenes, we mingle with the actors of living, actual, and terrific dramas."

"At least," said Horace smiling, "they are hourly passing before poetic eyes, which easily fill up the meagre and unyielding outline of events."

"You think so," replied the poet, "you shall judge; our acquaintance—I am almost disposed to say our friendship—dates only from a few brief hours, yet let us just recapitulate what scenes, what characters, with the events they both recall, have been thrown before us as plot and matter for a drama if cunningly interwoven by the playwright's art.

"One hour ago, for instance, we stood together in the drawing-room of Madame de Baval's mansion. You were talking boldly, so boldly that none would have dared listen to you except perhaps myself, who have the dwarf's or jester's privilege, had your conversation not been sanctioned by the presence and the willing ear of beauty, in the person of Madame Rudiger."

"And does the presence of beauty then confer freedom of speech?"

"Not always, or directly; but Madame Rudiger is the favourite of Count Benkendorf, the grand master of the secret police. Let me see—

immediately conversing with you was your hostess, and then a member of the Imperial senate, a youthful mother with two charming daughters, and then a very venerable grey old man, fervent and warm in his devotion to his sovereign. They are no doubt all good and common-place people, from whose faces even Shakespeare could hardly have distilled one scene or one soliloquy; but, if quiet, they are loyal, very loyal, all people who have favours for which to be grateful. Your hostess, to begin with, was a Russian heiress; she married when your revolution scattered your great names abroad, an emigrant, really a barber or a barber's boy, but who assumed the title of Count de Baval Montmorency. The restoration came and brought with its changes a real Montmorency to Saint Petersburg. The first baron of Christendom was angered to see the name and arms of his family borne by an impostor, and he complained loudly and bitterly. But in this dilemma, autocratic power—secured in its good-will through some influential channel,—came to the assistance of the heiress and her husband. It is the privilege of all sovereigns to make nobles; but if they happen to be despotic, they can in addition both

unmake and make them, without consulting either a ministry or the public opinion. Profiting by this privilege, which allowed him to give any name, or arms, or title, an emperor conferred upon the husband precisely those which he had assumed. Now, there are not wanting men, who venture to assert that, though a Russian Tsar might have a right to give to any individual any name or coat of arms resulting from any possible combination of the alphabet or of the signs of heraldry, still it was necessary to reserve those already chosen and rendered illustrious by the deeds of a long line, who had borne them gallantly through ages: but this only serves to shew you that there are creatures to be found, who would make reservations even in the power of our autocrats. She thus became a Baval-Montmorency, made by an emperor instead of by a king.

"If we now turn to the sentimental mother, she has been called into the circle of court intimacy in the very commencement of the present reign, or rather I should say within the circle of Imperial notice and favour.

"That grave old man received from the Emperor a munificent donation to comfort him in

a domestic calamity,—the sum of fifty thousand roubles!

"The senator, Demetrius or Dimitri-Danskoi was once admitted when he asked it, straight to his sovereign's presence, in an hour of bustle and of confusion; he then received, or he was promised, some of those orders and crosses which mark his worth and services. There we have four individuals who should all feel deep devotion and unceasing gratitude towards their gracious monarch."

"And in truth, they do seem to feel it," observed Horace.

"They do," said the poet, "undoubtedly they do; but let us proceed. We left Madame de Baval's an hour ago, and then where did we go? Let me see—we were leaning over the parapet of the second bridge; the clear broad Neva flowed rapidly beneath us, and behind us, and before us, reflecting in its waters the Winter Palace, with its many windows, and reflecting too the light that glares redly in the face of day, from the corner windows of the second story fronting the Admiralty and the river. *There* sleeps, or perchance watches, the mighty master. We crossed the bridge, we turned the fortress,

the fortress in which the Russian Emperors lie interred, in which their gold is coined, and where in dungeons below the water-mark linger at this moment many prisoners, state-prisoners, no doubt great criminals.

"We are now standing on the green turf of the glacis. It is not long ago—on the 26th of July 1826—upon this very spot which we are treading, rose five tall gallows trees, and from the cells of those very dungeons I saw five young men led out to die."

"To die!" said Horace, "of what had they been guilty?"

"Of worse than infidelity towards the Emperor, which our catechism calls the worst of sins and the most horrible of crimes—for it was of actual rebellion. You have heard no doubt of the secret societies, which for years were labouring to overturn our paternal form of government; you have heard no doubt of the revolt of the 12th of December, when, on the accession of the Emperor to the throne, some of the regiments of the guard, instigated by the conspirators, refused to take the oath of allegiance and proclaimed the Constitution and his brother Constantine, who had abdicated in his

favour. You have heard perhaps that the Emperor remained many hours in his palace, letting the insurrection spread, before he had made up his mind to act, and that fortunately Prince Sergius Troubetskoi, the dictator, chosen by the conspirators, together with their other leaders, who had sworn to 'strike home' like Greek or Roman tyrant-slayers, all vanished in the hour of action and of danger, leaving their followers without guidance—young and fiery officers, performing prodigies of valour, and leading up the soldiers whom their conduct and enthusiasm had electrified, to wait the livelong day for craven chiefs, who never came, or who were in their terror then betraying them. You may have heard how, once the Emperor's tardy resolution taken, stern and unyielding, he refused all compromise.

"You have heard no doubt how the revolted troops waiting for orders were drawn up on the Isaak's place, with their backs to the Senate, on the other side of Peter's statue; how Miloradovitch, the favourite general of the army, came up to harangue the rebels, and how the Lieutenant Kahovski shot him down. Miloradovitch was a fine old soldier, a hundred battles

had left his body scarless, but had so covered his breast with stars, and orders, and crosses, that the fatal bullet could not reach him without piercing some of them. He was the military governor of the city; but so much had he forgotten in his foreign wars our Russian customs, that he neglected all the perquisites and opportunities of such a tempting office, and, strange to say, took nothing but his pay!—his pay, a mere per-centage on his perquisites; and, as he gambled, he has often come home and asked for dinner. 'There is no dinner,' said his solitary servant. 'Then give me coffee.' 'There is no coffee.' 'Then let me have a pipe,' and he smoked his pipe and lay down on his couch, he, the military governor of St. Petersburg, for want of money! We had read these things in Roman history of Fabricius and Cincinnatus, but we ranked them with the tales of centaurs, until we saw an honest military governor.

"It was a pity that, having once, perhaps unwittingly, deceived the soldiers in a prior mutiny, he came again upon a mission of falsehood; but at all events he fell.

"And then the fray commenced. The faithful troops long refused to fire upon their

brethren, and the revolters still retained their line; but Benkendorf had secured the artillery; and when the Emperor had retired behind the Admiralty, out of range of the arms of the insurgents, in case they should retaliate, then his artillery began to play, and then at length the fire of musketry commenced in earnest. Close and murderous rattled the case-shot and the grape, and the musket balls came pattering like hail, or struck into human bodies with the sound of rain drops on water. The rebels were mowed down, dispersed, and scattered—they fled along the English Quay, and down the Galernoi Oulitza; but the Emperor's wrath rose as they yielded. 'Go on,' he said, 'go on! go on! I have defiled their mothers!' and, although they had thrown down their arms, the grape still continued to ply them until utter darkness came. Every lamp along the quay and every water-spout along the narrow lane of the Galernoi, was riddled. The whole night long, they broke holes through the ice of the Neva, as they do when the Emperor blesses its waters, and they cast the bodies of twelve hundred of the rebels through into the current of the river. Of the faithful soldiers

there were only several, because the insurgents had rather refused to obey than ever resisted.

"Some even entertained the sacrilegious thought that the Emperor, being no usurper, ought to have pardoned the fidelity of men, who thought to uphold the cause of the legitimate sovereign his brother, from whom he held his own legitimate right. But they were not forgiven, and then commenced the investigation and the trial of the wilful rebels, and in July the execution of their sentence. Seven months had thus elapsed you see between the outbreak and their final punishment. I need not tell you that nearly every noble family of the Empire was more or less compromised in some of its members. So there were punishments public and private: thirty were publicly doomed to Siberia for life, and five were doomed to die. Of course, they were the most guilty, but assuredly they were not the most cowardly or ignoble of the conspirators. They had all been friends of mine, though, as loyalty commands, I have since disowned them, and rooted out from my bosom the sympathy and the respect which sometimes struggles with my duty.

"The first of the condemned was Colonel

Pestel, one of Plutarch's heroes; the soldier, the philosopher, the jurist, the man of science, the philanthropist—Pestel, who had planned the association, which, as he deemed, was to regenerate his country, who guided its growth for years, struggling with all the sagacity of the statesman against the jealousy of caste and the narrow views of egotism. Pure in his intentions, prudent in his measures, he bent alike the passions of the selfish, and restrained the rashness of the enthusiastic to his purpose.

"The recreations of his Herculean labour were a giant's task, the compilation of a code of Russian laws, more elaborate and complete than all the salaried Russian jurisconsults had during one whole century framed or put together.

"It happened that the jealousy of those who sought only their individual interest in the projected movement, had elected, to preside over the association in the north, another leader in his stead, the Prince Sergius Troubetskoi, the Brutus of private theatricals, the ignominious braggart who threw away his shield.

"Pestel was consequently absent from St. Petersburg when the Emperor Alexander died, and he was ill besides; but, had he been in the

capital, hearty and hale, there are those who think that, at this hour, Russia might be the great federal Sclavonic Union, and Pestel the Russian Washington.

"He was ill, as I have said when taken, and when taken he knew at once his doom; his only care appeared to be that they would save and handle tenderly his famous Russian Code.

"The second was the Sub-lieutenant Bestoujef-Roumin: do not confound him with the brothers Bestoujef who behaved so gallantly in the revolt in St. Petersburg. Though he too was taken, sword in hand, his proper weapon was the pen. Fiery, enthusiastic, energetic, and gifted with the fatal gift of poesy, if he had written birthday odes or laudatory stanzas to a courtier's leman, he might have turned it to the sole account that our Russian atmosphere allows. The pen is a mighty instrument, when it speeds the sword and makes the sword winged; but with us it is still useless and ignoble, as the uncut feather in the goose's pinion.

"But Bestoujeff-Roumin had been drawn into the full vortex of crime—the crime of those who wished not alone to subvert our paternal government, not only to pull down our rulers

to the level of humanity, but to raise up to it our very serfs. Yes, Sir! will you believe, there were enthusiasts who did not turn their cattle loose into the woods and steppes, and yet proposed to unyoke their serfs and make them free men. What but the halter or the mine could correct such men, when we consider that they themselves were slave possessors, and that with the possession of their slaves they forfeited their revenues, because with us the soil is valueless without the peasants on it, as the title-deeds would be of property overwhelmed by an invasion of the ocean.

"So far and so hopelessly had Roumin become perverted, that he even wrote his political catechism of impious celebrity; I mean politically impious. He had no excuse to plead of ignorance of his duty, for it was framed question for question, answer for answer, in awful parody, of the last most stringent book of religious instruction for youth, since everywhere adopted through the empire. You shall hear it, for although when I was young, we had not obedience inculcated by so beautiful a theory, I am too loyal a Muscovite not to have learned by heart what every Muscovite and Polish child

is taught when it comes lisping from its mother's breast.

"'What,' says the Imperial Catechism, 'are the duties religion teaches us towards the Emperor as his humble subjects?' Peter the Great forbade that his people should style themselves his slaves.

"'We owe him,' replies the answer, 'devotion,'—obedience, fidelity, taxes, service, love and prayers, all comprised in the words fidelity and devotion.

Q.—"'In what should this devotion consist?'

A.—"'In the most absolute respect, in words, in motions, conduct, thought, and actions.'

Q.—"'What obedience do we owe the Emperor?'

A.—"'Entire, passive, and in every respect unlimited obedience.'

Q.—"'In what consists the fidelity we owe the Emperor?'

A.—"'In the vigorous execution, without examination of all his orders, and in the act of doing all that he exacts without a murmur.'

Q.—"'How are want of respect and infide-

lity towards the Emperor to be considered in a religious point of view?'

A.—" 'As the most detestable sin and the most horrible crime.'

Q.—" 'What books prescribe these duties?'

A.—" 'The Holy Scriptures, particularly the psalms, the gospels, and the epistles.'

Q.—" 'What examples confirm these?'

A.—" 'That of Jesus Christ himself, who lived and died the subject of the Emperor of Rome, and submitted himself respectfully to the sentence which condemned him.' "

"What!" exclaimed Horace, "is such a catechism taught to your Russian children? You have surely substituted the name of the Emperor for that of God?"

"So Bestoujeff Roumin thought," replied the poet; "and there are those who, blaspheming like him, call the Imperial catechism blasphemous. I will not rank you amongst them, nor will I repeat the catechism Roumin substituted for it; suffice it to say that he attempted to prove in it from Holy Writ the equality of all mankind in their Creator's eyes, and to argue that even Christ, the God-man and the first of men, assumed no temporal authority; in short

he filled it with similar impieties, though clothed in startling words and eloquently put together.

"After divine service and before the fight, Roumin read it to the revolted regiment; the soldiers simply asked for an increase of pay, and, when the fight went against them, they gave up the author with his eloquent catechism and his sword.

"The third was Colonel Sergius Mouravief Apostol: he was the right arm and the commander of the Southern Association, of which Roumin was the tongue.. He was overtaken as he was marching on Kiew, the old capital of the Russian Grand Dukes, by an overwhelming force; he attacked them gallantly, his brother fell by his side; and he was given up by the treachery of his disheartened soldiers with Bestoujef-Roumin.

"The fourth was the Lieutenant Kahovski: he was taken in St. Petersburg. Although his rank was not high amongst the conspirators, he was at his post and fought in the revolt of the 12th with the determined courage of one of the three hundred Spartans. He shot down Miloradovitch, and killed with his own hand Colonel Stürler.

"The fifth was a sub-lieutenant; a youthful husband, wealthy, enthusiastic, and ardent. His mansion was the place of rendezvous for the conspirators of the capital. There, on the night preceding the fatal outbreak, they held their last decisive conclave under the presidency of the Prince whom they had named Dictator. There speeches were made, in which the magniloquent common-places of declaimers, derived soul-stirring interest and significance from the proximity of the events that were to test the words of every speaker. There many hearts beat high with aspirations of the morrow, assembled as they were, not like the midnight assassins, who with the acquiescence of his sons, went to strangle Paul, to rid themselves of personal proscription and to remove their own immediate tyrant; but in the glorious hope that the next declining sun would see a mighty nation called into that existence, which it feels so joyously when from a thing, an object of possession, it becomes a being.

"None were more enthusiastic than the youthful husband, when they parted to meet the following evening as the triumphant liberators of their country, or, as they swore after the Spartan

King, to sup with Charon. They all did meet again, here where we are standing, seven months afterwards, beneath the five tall gallows-trees.

"But the youthful husband had a wife, who loved him passionately, a wife neglected too because she had a rival. Her hope of winning back, by long untiring patience and unwearying tenderness his lost affection, was interrupted by her terrors at the dangerous career he was pursuing; with the quick ear and ready wit of woman's anxious love, she divined the object of the stealthy solemn conclave, and contrived to overhear the plans of the conspirators. When they were gone, she threw herself at her husband's feet, she implored him not to join the dangerous enterprise, she wearied him with her forebodings and her tears, till, kissing them away, he reminded her how his honour and his safety were hopelessly compromised, and finally rejected all her agonising supplications. If anything then could have added to the anguish of lost love, it must have been the thought that its absence from his heart rendered her eloquence powerless to persuade in an emergency so cruel. There was more heart than head about that gentle creature, or she might have known that

her bosom's lord, even pausing there, had sinned already beyond all forgiveness and all hope. He had sinned in word, in thought, and intention, against Imperial Majesty, and though the intent of good shall not be taken into account, but go to pave the infernal regions, and though the intent of evil shall not be noted down by the recording angel when a virtuous resolution conquers it—what are we but the dust before the footstool of our Tsars, that we should dare expect their mercy on repentant traitors? Besides, we are in Russia, not in Heaven; but this she did not think of; she fancied she could save him if she could dissuade; but to dissuade, her art, her arguments, her prayers, her tears, had failed.

"At length, her part was taken—after a long and agonising conflict between the good and evil, the littleness and the heroism of a woman's nature, between her pride, and love, and jealousy, the angel in her disposition triumphed—the injured wife sought out the mistress.

"Day dawned gloomily on the morning of the 12th, to close after a few brief hours on scenes of bloodshed; the hour was come, the hour for which the husband had longed so ardently. The

younger and more generous of the conspirators, having borne down all resistance by their personal prowess, performed successfully the part allotted to them in the bloody drama, and brought up their soldiers to the place of rendezvous.

"But then the boastful and cowardly Dictator, the Prince Troubetskoi, and their other leaders were missing: they were either crouching in corners in their abject terror, or denouncing their companions.

"And then associated with their infamy was the youthful husband, he too was missing. After the wife had failed, the mistress had prevailed. Her arms around his knees were chains which he had not the courage to break, and when the thunders or the crash of musketry and cannon rang through the frosty air, or boomed amid the palaces of St. Isaac's place announcing that the fate of sixty millions was deciding, he rose, as often convulsively to sink again, still captive to her passionate intreaties. Perhaps he remembered then that Mark Anthony had thus lost a world before him.

"Although he took no active part in the revolt, he had offended beyond remission a

master, stern, implacable, and unforgiving; and seven months afterwards he was one of those led out to die.

"During these weary months, which passed between the outbreak and the execution of the conqueror's justice, he personally saw, examined, threatened, all the prisoners and many of the witnesses. He saw their wives and parents, relatives and intimates, not to listen to their appeals to mercy, but to cross-question and interrogate them. It is said that few could endure unmoved the majestic flash of his Imperial eye, terrible with the consciousness of power.

"The Dictator, Prince Troubetskoi, clasped his knees, and begged for life in agonising accents.

"'Live,' said the judge, 'and he lives on, having once prayed for life, to pray often and often for the relief of death.'

"The calm and philosophic Pestel was frequently confronted with the Emperor; nothing could shake his iron soul, or bend it or heat it to intemperate invective.

"'Had you no remorse when conspiring against my brother and myself?'

"'Less,' replied the conspirator, 'than your

brother and yourself, when awaiting the result of the conspiracy against your father.'

"His answers to the many interrogations, were apostrophes to his sovereign to take warning by the dangers he had escaped, and to avoid the conduct of his predecessors. They were attempts to shew him that his empire was an Augean stable, and arguments to induce him to examine and adopt his code of Russian jurisprudence, appropriating it like the spoil of a vanquished enemy.

"Pestel knew well that good intentions count for nothing, and he was anxious to leave some legacy to his country, thus certain that his life had not been wasted.

"These were the five great criminals, on whom the Emperor's justice was dealt, one summer morning on this very sod. A hedge of soldiers, or rather an army, kept back the crowd, amongst which, foremost appeared the relatives, the friends, and the acquaintance, whose names had flitted through the evidence on the lengthy trials of the men condemned, and who now came forth to disavow entirely by their presence a participation, which the government found too universal to punish.

" First there were led out from the fortress gate, thirty of the conspirators condemned for life to Siberia, with the Dictator foremost. Their swords were broken, their orders and their epaulettes, and their insignia, thrown upon a pile and burnt, their civil death decreed; their heads were shaven, their limbs were ironed, and their doom was read, not only to living death, but to the living burial of a Siberian mine.

" All this was at the gallows' foot, and here all the conspirators met again, for next were led out the five destined for execution, dressed in long grey cloaks and hoods, at first covering their faces, like those of the victims in the Spanish auto-da-fés.

" Their faces, particularly Pestel's, were wan, pallid, and meagre, for it is said that even torture had not been spared them. But one and all of the doomed five shewed, by the firmness of their step and the enthusiastic sparkle of their eye, not only that they saw in death a refuge from the Imperial mercy, but the proud consciousness they entertained, that they, out of the millions of Muscovites who had perished by famine, by flood, and field, on deserts, or on

seas, or beneath the executioner's knife or lash, to do the bidding or to glut the vengeance of tyrants, or of tyrants' myrmidons, that they were the first five who had died for their country.

"If they spoke, it must have been like Marino Faliero to time and to eternity, for the rolling drum rendered all speech inaudible, and they were launched into the air.

"But even in this solemn moment, the vulgar and the common-place are inextricably interwoven with the tragic. The executioner, whose business it was to find the ropes, an adept at the merciless knout, but not in the art of hanging, misjudged the strength required to sustain a human body, and purchased old instead of new, spending the difference in a dram. As the drop fell, a thrill of horror spread through all the crowd: three of the cords broke—and from their high gibbets, bursting through the flooring of the scaffold by their inert weight, down fell three of the victims.

"The drum had ceased rolling; those who presided at the execution had thought that all was over, or that the strangulating rope would have hushed all speech and indiscretion. But the undaunted Pestel exclaimed aloud:

"'Wretched country, in which they know not even how to hang a man!'

"He added something more, but the dead silence of the crowd was broken by an itinerant vender of cold tea, who took advantage of it to vend his wares, and the last words of the dying patriot and legislator were lost in the cry of,

"'Tea, tea, tea, excellent tea!'

"They died, and with them died the hopes of all who dreamed of the regeneration of their country."

Here the poet looked around him, and then stooped down and kissed the sod hurriedly.

"Come, come, come!" said the Lieutenant Alexius, who looked as pale and agitated as if they were all then conspiring.

"It is a terrible story," said Count Horace.

"It is not done," replied the poet. "The Emperor after the execution, caused the best part of Pestel's code to be adopted in the compilation of laws, which is intended to immortalize his reign, and which may do so whenever a reign shall come in which the laws are followed as well as established. But, as he had refused the prayer of Pestel's father, who begged

in vain the life of his heroic son, he made him a donation of fifty thousand roubles."

"What a gratuitous piece of brutality!" exclaimed Horace.

"Old Pestel did not think so. He accepted them, and was grateful; he is grateful now, at least he told you so two hours ago."

"Told *me*!" said Horace.

"Told you," repeated the narrator, "that old gentleman who spoke so warmly in his sovereign's praise was Pestel, the Russian hero's father. You were unlucky too in talking of Rohan's conspiracy to the mother-in-law of an arch-conspirator, the mother of the Dictator's wife."

"What, Madame de Baval!"

"Precisely," returned the poet, "Madame de Baval. She is very loyal now, but she is said not always to have been so; perhaps some might consider the method taken to convert her to her present sentiments, a rude one and inapplicable to a noblewoman, or to a female so far past life's golden meridian. She was sent for one day to the office of the secret police, where the grand master, Count Benkendorf,

the same who brought up the artillery so opportunely on the 12th of December; a very gentlemanlike and urbane old man, caused a dose of corporeal castigation to be inflicted in private on the lady, which has since rendered her both discreet and loyal. The Count has not been always so ungallant, for he notoriously favours Madame Rudiger, her guest last night. Her husband has been sent abroad on a diplomatic mission."

"Surely," said Horace, "you are giving the rein to your poetic imagination, and trying the extent of my credulity."

"Only with bitter truths," replied the poet, "and I shall have to try it farther. There was a nephew amongst the conspirators, a nephew who had been often caressed and was still dearly loved by a fond uncle, at least the nephew, Prince Alexander Odoievski thought so. He was one of the conspirators who had escaped the massacre and the pursuit, and, in the keen frost of a winter's night, he lay concealed between the boats, which serve as arches to the floating bridge; he lay for hours trying to warm his frozen limbs by burying them in the cold uncomforting snow; at least he deemed it so, for

he had not yet tried the frigidity of an uncle's bosom. He saw the ice broken and the dead, load after load, thrust through the holes and consigned to the living stream beneath it.

"At length, horror and cold rendered his post no longer tenable, he braved the danger of discovery, and gained his uncle's mansion—he was saved; he found him and he craved an hour's repose, and warmth, and funds wherewith to fly.

"But the uncle was sorely tempted: on the one hand he saw a pressing danger, on the other an opportunity of proving his loyalty; no doubt he thought upon the sacrifice of Abraham.

"'But come,' he said at length, 'fly with me, there is not an instant to lose,' and away he drove with his shivering nephew, not to a place of concealment, but to the Winter Palace.

"The victim had no longer power to fly or to resist; and the fond uncle led him straight into the Emperor's presence, for the Emperor saw every one connected with the conspiracy.

"The Prince Alexander now curses his uncle from the profoundest depth of a Siberian mine, and the uncle, sporting the badges of distinction with which his sovereign has honoured him, talks

of his loyalty and his devotion, as his antecedents authorize him in talking, and as you heard him talk this evening, for he is the senator Demetrius or Dimitri-Danskoi."

"Wretch!" said Horace, "but tell me what became of the poor wife of the conspirator who was hanged."

"The wealthy sub-lieutenant's mistress," returned the poet, answering beside the question, "denied all knowledge of and all participation in his crime, and the criminal himself strenuously bore out her assertions to the last. But the day his condemnation was pronounced, she was invited to join the Imperial circle. The master's eye fell on her with a searching scrutiny; but the lady was not pale, she was well rouged, and laughed with a merry laugh, as clear as the tinkling of a silver bell at an Imperial pun. The master was satisfied."

"Good heavens!" said Horace, "but the wife?"

"The wife laughed too on the day of her husband's execution; after the Imperial justice had refused her prayers, she burst into a long hysteric frightful fit of laughter. She was then, she has since remained—a maniac!"

" A maniac !" repeated Horace, " and did the senses of the wretched mistress survive her horrible hypocrisy ?"

" I do not know," replied the poet, " but you should judge that best, or at least you will be able to judge it well to-morrow, for she is the sentimental mother with the two fair daughters, with whom I heard you promise to dine to-morrow at Peterhoff."

CHAPTER II.

THE Prince Isaakoff was reclining as usual on his sofa, with the long Russian pipe in his mouth, when Horace joined him. In front of him was standing the venerable and imposing figure of a tall and stately individual, long past the prime of life, with features full of gravity, indicative of florid health, and indeed a little replete in their robustness. But his dense beard, descending to his middle, was of silver grey, and his thick hair, of the same colour, flowed downwards over his shoulders still lower. He wore a cap of black velvet on his head, and was habited in a long robe of dark cloth, with very wide sleeves, and marked on the breast, like the tunic of a crusader, with a long white cross. His aspect was patriarchally majestic; and, when he spoke, his voice sounded sono-

rously clear, like the bass notes of a cathedral organ.

"My dear fellow!" said the Prince earnestly, "what a terrible wild Englishman you have brought with you as groom!"

"What my Bob Bridle, the quietest and most steady servant breathing?"

"Well, he may be quiet enough for England; but if he goes on so, I can only tell you that you will find him rather expensive here."

"He is a devil! my high and well born master," chimed in the steward Dietrich.

"But what has he been doing?" inquired the Count.

"Only been guilty of assault, rebellion, and sacrilege, which I think is pretty well by twelve o'clock in the day."

The Count looked dubiously in the Prince's face, but he was evidently serious, and so he exclaimed, "It is impossible. What do you mean?"

"Only that you must make up your mind, either to abandon him to his fate, or to give ample and immediate pecuniary satisfaction."

"Give him up, the tidiest groom and the boldest rider in Christendom? Oh, no, he must be got out of the scrape at any cost. But what in the name of good fortune has he done?"

"Why, in the first place, he has beaten your coachman, which don't signify, because he is my slave; but then he has used the oil of the sacred lamp for ignoble purposes; he has smashed the image of a saint, and pulled one of our Greek priests, the Father Bazilius, whom you see, by the beard; and, to crown the whole business, he has assaulted and shut up a police officer and soldier."

"I can't believe it," said Horace. "I should like to hear his own story. Let us have him up."

"He is waiting outside:—call him, Dietrich."

The redoubted Bob Bridle walked very quietly in. He was clad in his red and white striped cotton jacket, his leathers were spotless, his neckkerchief delicately white, and his top boots mirror-like. No words could have thrown such doubt on the veracity of the accusations which charged him with desperate and outrageous conduct, as did his formal, cool and self-possessed demeanour. As he would himself have expressed it, "he had not turned a hair." Bob Bridle pulled his forelock respectfully to his master, and scraping his right foot along the ground, gave a scarcely perceptible kick backwards, which was intended to add to the graces of his salutation.

The Count addressed him, for Bob Bridle never spoke till he was spoken to.

"What is the matter?" said the Count, speaking as if nothing had happened. "What have you got to say to me?"

"This here, Sir," answered Bob, "fust, Lucifer took his bran mash last night, and next I took your note to the embassy, as directed, and was told that my Lady, the Ambassadress, is going on as well as can be expected."

"So far, so good," replied Horace. "But have you nothing of more importance to say; do you know any thing of this man?" pointing to the priest.

"Not much," said Bob, shaking his head, "and still less to his credit."

"Well now, what has happened between you?"

"A row," said Bob, "I am free to confess; but I was a-going to tell you, Sir, all about it in regular row-tation."

"Pray, let us hear your story, for here are terrible complaints against you."

"It aint a short un," said Bob, "if I must 'splain it all."

"Never mind," replied his master, "out with it all, take time to it, and tell it your own way."

"Then, Sir," said the groom, "you've given

the charge of the Rooshian horses to the Rooshian coachman, as understands 'em, but you've give me the charge of the oats and hay for the whole stable, which was as wise a thing as any gentleman ever did."

After this exordium, Bob paused for a moment, and then went on.

"Now, Sir, I must tell you, that when first we come to this here city, an English groom comes up to the stable-door, uncommon friendly like, though I never see him before. Now between you and I, and the post, Sir, he smelled very strong of spirits, and looked as dirty as a Rooshian life-guardsman in them dung-coloured bed-gowns they wears, when not buckramed up, and which I suppose they calls great-coats. 'I am out of place,' says he. 'But that is no reason,' says I, 'why them buttons of yours need be so,' for he had got two brass veskit buttons sewed on to one gaiter, and the t'other fastened by a bit of string in the top hole, which looked scandalous. 'Well,' says he, 'a man looses his spirits when he looses his 'ployment.' 'I wish he'd lose the smell on 'em,' says I, 'and he'd be like to get it all the sooner.' But as he was an Englishman, Sir, in this here strange country, and knowed all its ways, as well as a horse knows his stable, I've come somehow to know

him, though he is neither quite so tidy nor so 'spectable as I could wish. Now the day you bought them Rooshian horses, and engaged the Rooshian coachman, Billy—"

"Vasili," suggested Horace.

"It does mean, William," observed the Prince with a smile.

"Ay," said Bob, "I knowed the English, for it must be Billy, to say nothing of the beard as fits the name. 'Well Sir, Jack What's-his-name,' says to me, 'you are surely not a going to sit down with a mugic? It won't do here. An Englishman can no more demean himself by sitting down with them Rooshians, than he would with pigs.' But I didn't attend to him, for when first I see the natives, thinks I to myself they have as many good pints as any foreigners I ever come across. They seem fond of their horses, they drives 'em with a snaffle, and they takes their comfortable tea, or goes into the cellar to drink London porter, which is all more creditable than the macaroni of the Italians, or the red vinegar of the Frenchmen. And then, as for their not being civilised, I never see more civility anywhere, for two piemen in the streets, or two of your worships (Iswost-chicks) as they calls the Rooshian jarveys, bows to each other, like dancing masters, when they

meets. So I didn't take Jack's advice, partly because pride is sinful, and partly because I didn't know the Rooshians was so unpleasant. Says Jack, 'If you sits down with him, I must cut your company;' says I, 'you may cut your stick, for I'm Christian enough to know that Billy is a creature of flesh and blood like ourselves, and a man is a man after all;' and so he is, Sir; but some on 'em is rather dirty and uncommon dishonest, and that there Rooshian Billy is just one of that sort.

"Now, Sir, by having lived in a foreign embassy, he speaks a little French, and so do I; so I made myself companionable with him, and gave him the run of everything, except the corn-bin. The first thing I see very queer about him, was one day when I catched him cribbing some lard and lampblack and brown sugar, I had mixed up in a tin to blacken Lucifer's hoofs with. I catched him, Sir, with a pot of baked buckwheat grits, as they calls 'kassia,' before him, actually putting the stuff to his porridge and eating it! 'You nasty devil,' says I, 'that was meant to grease my horses' hoofs, not your inside; here's butter if you want it;' and after that he did use the butter, but he took the grease too.

"Now, as nigh as I could make him out,

Billy takes it into his head that the stable is haunted by what he calls a Domovoi, a sort of Robin Goodfellow or Brownie, which eats up the corn and turns the horses' coats; and yesterday he calls me into his stable, to show me the tails of his horses, which the Domovoi had plaited together in the night, but which in my opinion had got entangled by their whisking 'em about. Now Billy declares that sometimes the Domovoi takes a dislike to black horses, and sometimes to roan, and sometimes to grey, and that nothing would go right till he went and fetched the Pope to drive him out with holy water. So I told him by all means to do so, because I happened to know that the Pope was at Rome in Italy, where I see him with my own eyes. But what do ye think, Sir, last night in he brings this gentleman with the knob stick, (pointing to Father Basil) saying he was the Pope, which I knowed of course to be a flam, the Pope (though a papist) being a different character altogether, and a great deal more respectable. Well, in he goes to Billy's stable, and, after he had mountebanked enough, he says he has driven the Domovoi out and that he will never return again, which I expect was the only true part of the story. For, though I am *rising* five and thirty, I never see any spirits, excepting them

as people keep in bottles. Then, Sir, he wants to go into Lucifer's box, but I said no, no; no tricks upon travellers there; the Domovoi won't plait his tail or meddle with him, I know, any more than any other foreigner that ever I saw. And when he found it wouldn't do, he asks for one of them blue five rouble notes for his trouble; Billy declaring that it was customary. 'Well,' says I, 'I'll ask my master to-morrow; and if he sees proper to encourage your tomfoolery, you shall have it, so come again and see. 'Then' says Billy, 'will you give him some brandy and he will give you his blessing.' 'Here's the brandy,' said I, for the bottle was on the top of my chest of drawers, and I couldn't do less; 'but he may keep the blessing for them as wants it.' So down he sat and made hisself jolly, and out he pulls a pack of cards and wants to play with us."

"What, that venerable-looking priest," said Horace, looking incredulously from Bob Bridle to the Prince Isaakoff, who merely shrugged up his shoulders, as much as to intimate that the story was highly probable.

"Yes," said Bob, "that very same old sinner there; and very dirty cards they was. Now, as the best game but one, I know on, is *put*, and the best of all, which I've been given to these

many years is, not to play at all, I declined his offer, so that when the brandy was drunk, he grew very cosey and affectionate, and wanted more. Says I, 'When you come to-morrow.' Then, Sir, he asked me for my name, 'Bob,' says I. 'And your father's name?' said he. 'Bob,' again says I. Which when Billy had explained it to him, he calls me *Bob*, *Bobovitch*, upon the spot, which was neither civil of him to do, nor gratifying to my feelings to hear.

"Now this, Sir, was the state of the case last night. But this morning, Billy walks in with another Rooshian; he had asked me the day before, as I understood him, whether he should bring any one to take away the litter, and I told him, by all means. Now, Billy's friend had got a sack with him, which I thought a queer way of clearing a stable-yard. You must know, that it was the day on which I give him the three days' corn for his horses, which, I will say, he takes some care on, which is a redeeming pint in his character, though he does make'm as fat as if they was meant for Leadenhall market. But presently Rooshian Billy puts his horses' corn into his friend's sack, and his friend shakes hands with me, and pulls out a bottle of *wodky*, endeavouring to explain the thing they wanted to set afoot.

"Now, as soon as I was sure of what they was up to, I do confess that I gave them a clip or two a piece, and when they made off without waiting for their change, I shied the friend's brandy bottle after him.

"Well, Sir, when they was off, I began to clean the bits and stirrup irons, when what do I find, but that all the oil in the harness room is gone. Oh, oh! says I, that oil is gone after the contents of my grease-pot, to smoothen the inside of that Rooshian Billy's in-tess-tines. But I'll be even with him; and, just at that minite, I happen to see a little lamp a-hanging before a pictur, which he is so uncommon fond on that I suppose it his father's, who, howsoever was not by any means so andsome as the frame they've put him in. Now, thinks I, though he may be so very fond of the old gentleman that he likes to look at him by candle-light, he should have drank his own oil before he took mine. So down I hooks the lamp, and begins cleaning away with the oil that was inside of it."

Here Bob paused for an instant to take breath and then resumed,

"In the course of half an hour, Sir, back comes Billy. He first tries to persuade me that he had only been a-jesting; but when he saw that I wouldn't believe him, out he takes a

little pictur, the size of a Jack-in-a-box, and, having spit upon the glass and wiped it with his sleeve, he kneels down before it, as I've often seen him do before, and seems to take it to witness, calling it Bogy (*Boje*), which considering its ugliness isn't by no means a bad name.

"When that wouldn't do, he lays flat down, and, imploring that I wouldn't tell you, begins kissing my feet and slobbering them all over, as if taking the polish off a man's boots was the way to come over him; and then, Sir, last of all he has the impudence to offer me a silver rouble to hold my tongue. So I thought it right to kick him out; but presently he raises a terrible outcry, and declares that his Bogy is broken, which was a fact, and at the same time he twigs his lamp. You would have thought, by the uproar he made, that his Bogy was as beautiful as paint, and that he was the most injured individual about his oil as ever walked upon two legs. So I packs the coachman, and the lamp, and the broken Bogy all out together.

"Next, Sir, who should walk in but that gentleman as calls himself the Pope, aggrawatin me in the first place, by calling me Bob Bobovitch again; he throws his arms around my neck, and, smelling as he did of salt herrings, brandy, and onions, he kisses me as if I was a young

lady. So says I, 'You old goat!' and taking him by the beard I dragged him out after them.

"Then, Sir, they all come round the door gabbling like so many turkey-cocks, and even Mr. Dietrich there comes up to me, and joining his hands together, says, 'Mine Got, mine Got.' So says I, 'no, you hav'n't *got* yours yet. But you'll have it in the twinkling of a bed-post, if you don't look sharp.' For you see, Sir, I was very much aggrawated. But I wish to let you know exactly everything that passed. Now this one might have thought was enough for one day's plague, to a quiet, peaceable man, who only wants to do his duty honestly. But they was up to another game with me, for presently I see one of them police fellows, with a sword and cocked hat, which they calls nasty-rats (*Nadziratels*) and another soger with him. So thinks I, I can't wake my master at this hour, and they are getting too many for me, so I was under the necessity of shutting up the nasty-rat and his man, till such time as I thought you'd be up; and this is the whole story, Sir, in every pint from beginning to end."

"Well," said the Count, "you have behaved like a man from beginning to end, though you have been playing terribly at cross-purposes.

But how the devil did you manage those police fellows ?"

"Why, Sir, as I have heared Paddy often laughed at for doing, by surrounding them, with the help of Lucifer. When I sees 'em a coming I pops quietly into his loose-box. The nasty-rat beckoned to me to come out, and I beckoned to him to come in, so, seeing the horse licking my hand in an amiable manner, in he comes at last with his man. But no sooner did Lucifer see 'em, than he bristles up and flies at 'em. Now you know, Sir, that in his box there are a couple of iron basket-racks on each side of it, so as Lucifer had got between them and the door, up they climbs into 'em like lamp-lighters, the nasty-rat into one, and his follower into the other."

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted the Count, "and what became of them ?"

"Why, there they are, Sir, now, and there they have been these two hours, like two rogues in the pillory, for Lucifer won't let 'em come down, I'll warrant. He has torn off both the nasty-rats uniform coat-tails, as was hanging over the rack; he has worried his cocked-hat like a young puppy-dog, though he has abstained from doing the same by his man, seeing that he turned his back to the wall."

"Well," said the Prince, "these English are the queerest people in the world. So far it appears that they have all fortunately imbibed the notion, that you are attached to your legation, which will wonderfully facilitate all arrangements with them, because they know that if they were to push your servant too hard he would eventually find effectual protection. A hundred roubles to the father, and a hundred roubles to the Naziratel, and a new image for Vasili, will I think repair the damage; you had better leave it entirely to Dietrich."

When the whole matter was explained to Bob, he expressed great contrition for the difficulties into which he had unintentionally drawn his master; but when he was assured that the priest, in calling him Bob Bobovitch, or Bob the son of Bob, was only using a courteous custom by which Russians distinguish every individual from the serf to the Emperor, he remained incredulous or dissatisfied.

"Let well alone," he said; "people never meddle with the name of Bob in England, and surely they could not mend it in Rooshia. As for whose son he was, that was no business of nobody's."

Dietrich first tried his powers of persuasion upon Father Basil. He began by offering him

ten roubles in full compensation for all the indignities the church had suffered both in his person and out of it; and father Basil, after protesting his particular respect for Prince Isaakoff and Count Horace, and his christian forgiveness of Bob, declared that he should consider himself as a guilty creature towards his holy mother in accepting less than five hundred for such a complicated case of sacrilege.

"Why," said Dietrich, "in our villages the priest only taxes a moderate theft at two dozen eggs, and an open blasphemy at a couple of chickens or a full grown goose."

"Ay," replied the father shrewdly, "but there you get a fathom of firewood for half a paper rouble, and here you pay eight for it if you buy it from the wood barge."

At length, Dietrich rose to fifty roubles, and Father Basilius descended to two hundred; at this stage Dietrich thought fit, for certain private reasons of his own, to remove the progress of the negotiation from the hearing of his master, and the affair was at length happily arranged, with the stipulation on the side of the injured party of the addition of a couple of bottles of rum. Dietrich then proceeded with the aid of Bob to release the Naziratel and his man, and to compromise matters with him.

"But I hope," said the Count, as soon as he could recover a serious countenance, and before Bob went, "I hope you will remember that we are in a strange country, and endeavour in future to respect its laws and regulations, and the prejudices and superstitions of its people, however ridiculous either may be."

"I will," said Bob, very solemnly, for he was touched by the manner in which his master had paid the heavy tax imposed upon him by his servant's mishaps, without a murmur or allusion. "My mind is made up; I'll keep my hands in my pockets as long I'm in this here Rooshian country, and I'll handle every thing I don't understand as gingerly as if they was pots of balsam flowers three parts blown."

But Bob's temper was sorely tried when, crossing the yard, the Pope, who had pocketed eighty roubles, and who had got a couple of bottles of rum under his arm. and a pint of the same liquid in his inward man, patted him familiarly upon the back, and gave Bob his jovial benediction in spite of his teeth.

CHAPTER III.

BLANCHE and her husband were again upon the road. After a few versts the country-houses or datchas on either side indicated their near approach to the city.

The idea which the wealthy Russians entertain of the pleasures of country life is very peculiar and utterly distinct from that of all other European nations, particularly of the English.

The gregarious instinct appears in this particular as strongly developed amongst the higher orders as it does amongst the peasantry, when, dreading isolated farms and cottages, which are almost unknown, they crowd into villages and hamlets—when they congregate in *atels* or associations; and when, shaven and drilled, and led to the field of battle, it makes them so formidable an infantry, because even discomfiture or terror only causes them to huddle up together like a flock of sheep instead of flying.

So, retirement in the summer to their own

estates is always a matter of business, of policy, or of economy, with the proprietors of them; but the residence of their choice is in these datchas, half villas and half cottages in the environs of large cities, of which the great attractions seem to be that they are crowded close to each other, and are often more overlooked than the winter residences which they have quitted in the towns.

Blanche observed that they were built in every variety of style, from the classic, with its Doric or Corinthian pillars, to the Saxon, or the Gothic. In magnitude and in fanciful absurdity of construction they resembled the cockney villas of a few years back; and the gay parties, sitting at their tea or their dessert, with open windows and within a few yards of the dusty road, strikingly resembled the scene witnessed on a fine Saturday summer evening, in the fanciful buildings which line the way to the great metropolis of England.

But, in the first place, there was this difference, that nearly all these Russian cottages and villas, and temples, were built of logs covered with a façade of painted planks, which gave them a scene-like and lumber-room appearance; and, in the next, that the people who were inhaling the freshness of the evening and the dust of the highway, were not citizens confined to a certain distance from the counter, but the owners of

vast hereditary estates, of villages, and hamlets, and primeval forests, whose only avowed pursuit was that of pleasure and amusement.

At length, a triumphal archway rose before them, surmounted by a colossal figure of bronze guiding the many figures yoked abreast which drew its car. This was the city gate. But not alone the sentinels on duty—not alone the numerous picket, whose vigilance is exercised by the constant ringing of a little bell which calls the soldiers to present arms to every passing general officer—are judged sufficient guard at the entrance of the capital. Horses, regardless of imperial ukases, might possibly run away, and not attend to the sentry's challenge, and this has been provided against. A ponderous beam traverses and bars suspiciously, even at midday, every entrance to the city. It is painted with the imperial tricolor, and is balanced on a pivot by an enormous mass of wood which serves as counterpoise, and the sentry by a chain raises it up when satisfied.

There are no drivers or riders in the Russian dominions so foolhardy as to attempt to dash past the picket-house, so that this barrier can only be raised against the animal impudence of bolting horses; the horses may just pass under without the bows of their Russian harness, but they must leave the carriage or the rider behind

them, as more than once has happened to the young merchants' clerks at the close of a holiday's ride.

The great beam rose and fell again; they were admitted. A tall gaunt sergeant of the picket, sallow and sternly stiff, demanded the names and passports of the travellers. Every one passing the gates of St. Petersburg, inwards or outwards, in any vehicle, must give his name. If indeed he be neither a traveller nor in uniform, by humbly saying that he is only a merchant going to his *datcha*, the *grivnik* or groat, the smallest silver coin, judiciously offered to the sergeant will exempt him from the formality of stepping out in the mud or rain to inscribe his name in the guard-house; but with the traveller or the unfortunate in uniform this cannot be; he must be inscribed upon the list, which is forwarded every night to the Emperor, who, when he is in town, peruses it with minute and puerile attention.

Now the Emperor, or else his brother, to whom the military list of departures and arrivals is also forwarded, may that very morning have met some officer whose regiment is quartered at Peterhoff, or Zarsko-Zelo, or Oranienbaum; and when the reports are brought to him at night by the military governor, the fancy may take him to see at what hour he entered or left

the city; and, supposing his name not to have been recorded, an investigation would follow; the officer on duty at the gate would be degraded, and sent to the Caucasus, and the sergeant and sentinel be condemned to run the gauntlet.

No trifling bribe can tempt in the face of so imminent a danger. With a traveller, too, there is considerable risk, because he may always possibly be a person of mark and distinction, whose advent may attract notice to the fatal omission of his name upon the list.

The sergeant, therefore, insisted that Mattheus should descend from the vehicle; and as soon as he ascertained that he was neither a foreign diplomatist nor a military man, he put on that air of malignant severity which all officials in the Russian empire, from high to low, assume towards those over whom they hold any temporary power of annoyance; for it is worthy of remark that, if the *employés* of several other continental states, though far from equalling Russia, are exceedingly venal, still they either strive to extract the bribe by their good-humoured civility, or at least this civility is always tendered in return for the bribe. But in Russia all, from high to low, to whom the smallest fraction of authority is delegated or sub-delegated, go rather on the principle of

bullying all who come within its range by their sternness and brutality, so that they may pay, and gladly pay, as much as possible to deprecate this gloomy severity.

But Mattheus knew exactly how to deal with the sergeant, who introduced him, and the writer who inscribed his name ; and, having feed them both, he was dismissed very speedily with indifferent contempt, instead of being detained three quarters of an hour with insult and contumely.

They drove on within the limits of the city, but still only among market-gardens or blank spaces of ground, boarded in by high wooden palisades, between which buildings, most frequently of timber, were scattered at intervals, and then across the canal, and down one long street till they cut across the Nevsky Prospect, and passed under a stupendous archway surmounted by another group of allegorical figures and harnessed steeds of bronze ; and then they emerged on the extreme end of a vast quadrangular space, and opposite to a prodigious, though unsightly pile, the Winter Palace, afterwards destined to be burned down, and rebuilt within a twelvemonth.

They passed the Winter Palace ; which as they drove along, the quay seemed of interminable length, in consequence of its adjoining the famous Hermitage, with which an

arched gallery, spanning the canal that runs into the river, connects it.

They proceeded past the line of private palaces which succeeded the Hermitage, till at length the carriage stopped before a princely edifice. The windows, looking on the Neva, were open, and several figures reclined over the balcony, whilst the sounds of music burst upon the ear. *Droshkies* and carriages waiting in the street showed still more clearly that there were guests within; the porter, arrayed in sober black, stood with the plate-glass door in his hand, decked in the scarf of a Swiss beadle, whilst the gaily liveried footmen behind him were evidently in holiday array.

"How very strange!" exclaimed Mattheus, "that just as his health is declining, he should have broken through the solitary habits of so many years;" and then he pressed Blanche's hand, and said with some agitation, "I am glad, dearest, to see you look so beautiful, for in another minute you will be in the presence of the best, the noblest, and the most kind of men, to whom your marriage with me, I trust, will be not only a surprise, but a rapturous surprise; and in whom you will really find a father!"

"Here?" said Blanche, with delighted astonishment at seeing the long perplexing mystery so unexpectedly and pleasingly cleared up; and then

there succeeded a little of the anxious timidity which a young wife may be excused in feeling when about to be ushered into the presence of a father-in-law, whose good opinion may so much depend upon a first and favourable impression.

The porter stepped aside with an expression of mingled deference and surprise.

"Hail to you, Mattvei Mattveitch" (Matthew the son of Matthew).

"Hail, brother!" replied Mattheus, to whom the porter's name did not immediately recur; "but how is Ivan Georgievitch" (John the son of George).

"Ivan Georgievitch! Do you jest, father? His body has been these six weeks with the worms, and his soul with the angels."

"What, dead!" shrieked the broad-shouldered and herculean Mattheus, in a voice expressing such a poignancy of agony, and with such an accent of despair, as nothing but a blow, acute and sudden, terrible and overwhelming, can wring from the bosom of a vigorous man. "Dead!" he repeated, "dead! dead! dead!"

Then raising his hands to his head, as if instinctively to compress the veins and arteries which seemed ready to burst with the dilating blood, he reeled and staggered, and fell down into a hall-chair, covering his eyes, and quite forgetful of his young, affrighted wife, who,

understanding nothing of the scene, remained aghast amongst the many-liveried footmen in the hall.

"Ay, dead;" said the little dwarf Archib, starting up from the bench on which he was lying. "And he was very cold; but they put him in a coffin, a very narrow coffin, so narrow that Archib could not creep in to warm his master's feet."

"Ah, Mattvei Mattveitch!" said Dietrich, stepping forward, "you have come too late; my high and well-born master longed anxiously for you, in his last hours. Nay, truly, let our sorrow be decorous as it is sincere; suspend your grief awhile; come this way."

"Your letter reached ten days ago, not him for whom it was intended—but us. Bless me! Is that your lady-wife? Come this way."

The bustling and obsequious Dietrich led Mattheus and his wife, not up the marble staircase of the Isaakoff palace, which the reader has doubtless recognised already, but through several rooms on the ground-floor into an apartment that looked out on the yard.

An elderly Russian, bearded and habited in a threadbare caftan, and another whose Russian physiognomy could not be mistaken, though shaven and dressed in black, were sitting before a tea service.

"Dead, my father dead!" repeated Mattheus, whose thoughts seemed all concentrated in that one stunning, terrible reflection.

"Here is Mattvei Mattveitch, and the foreign wife we were just talking about," said Dietrich.

"Welcome Mattvei Mattveitch—a joy in the midst of our sorrow," said both the Russians starting up, and one after the other embracing Mattheus, who seemed still as one entranced.

"Ah! and is this your strange wife?" exclaimed the elder, whose manner had been rendered tender, whose eyes were humid, and whose breath was tainted by the contents of an empty rum bottle. "A lovely creature, a dove, by the Lord, welcome, my little soul!"

And a merchant slave of the same stamp as our old friend Vasili Petrovitch, who had vowed the pious vow to St. Sergius at the post-house of Strelna that very morning, wiping the beard about his lip, wet with the contents of his glass, on the sleeve of his caftan, caught hold of Blanche, and imprinted on her lips a couple of hearty kisses. The odour of his breath, and the coarse vulgarity and manner of the action, inspired her with a bewildering horror and disgust. As she struggled from his arms, she found herself in the embrace of Dimitri, the valet; there was on his face the presumptuous

leer of the slave and varlet, who has engrafted on his low vulgarity the vices and the insolence of his superiors.

In vain Blanche looked, and called for Mattheus: she did not see him; where was he? Not rushing forward to avenge the disgusting impertinence from which his beloved wife was suffering, in his own palace or at least in the halls of his ancestors, as she imagined. No, his arms were clasped around her knees, and, frightful to behold, he was prostrate before her, like the Chenovnik's slave she had seen that morning, and with a frantic despair he dashed his forehead against the boards at her feet.

"Oh, Blanche, Blanche, Blanche! the terrible punishment of my crime has overtaken me; there is no hope, no remission for me! My father, my more than father, who could have saved everything, is dead."

"Never fear," said Blanche, whose eye was sparkling, and on whose brow the blood was proudly mantling. "Rise up, adored of my soul! rise, do not let any man say that he has seen my Mattheus in that position, even at his Blanche's feet. If a terrible misfortune has overtaken us, I feel the spirit of my race rise within me to face it. I am a heroine now, Mattheus; lift up thy noble brow, look at me, I am ready to ascend proudly with thee

the steps of the scaffold, or to face the dungeon, or the torture, or the mine. If even thou wert guilty—a thousand times, guilty—thy guilt is mine; as Adam shared the guilt of Eve, so we are man and wife, and thine is mine!"

"Oh, Blanche, my injured Blanche! its consequences are on thy head already. I am the fiend, who have drawn an angel down into the infernal gulph!" and again he dashed his forehead against the ground; "oh, there is no crime like mine!"

"Come," exclaimed Blanche, with a wild exaltation, as she vainly endeavoured to raise him up, "for better or worse I took thee and thou me. Come, in my breast there is a spirit to cheer thee through every fate; come, dear Mattheus, there is a refuge on my bosom for any guilt, so it be thine."

At these words, Mattheus, rose up. "What!" he said, in a low, distinct, and bitter tone, which sounded unearthly by its contrast, "what! make the breast of Blanche Mortimer a sanctuary for the *Slave?*"

"The slave!" shrieked the wife, and then she sank down on the floor; and it was the frantic husband's turn to raise her up.

There is something inconceivably terrible in that peculiar crisis of grief, when an enthusiastic mind has resolutely bent itself to face the

worst, and something worse even than the worst that its daring fancy had pictured has overtaken it. Death, and suffering, and separation, and pain, all had flashed across her brain in their most sombre colours. She had conjured up in her imagination, as she thought, all that was most fearful, and she had resolved to face it with the unwearying devotion of the wife and the firmness of the heroine; but when—thinking she had contemplated everything,—this sudden and astounding ignominy was added to the horrible, then like a bow, which has been distended to the utmost, and whose fibres snap when it receives a slight but sudden bend beyond its furthest distension, the spring, and force, and energy of her resolution were at once, and utterly and hopelessly destroyed.

"Mattvei Mattveitch," shouted Dietrich and his two fellow-slaves, "look up, here comes the Lord."

Let us ascend one instant to the drawing-room of Prince Isaakoff. There lingered over their coffee about a dozen of the guests who had dined with him. The Prince was on the point of excusing himself to drive to the Yelagin Gardens, when Jakof was announced, and entered boisterously.

"So, you never told us of the beauty you were importing, by all that is enchant-

ing, the most charming creature in St. Petersburg."

"What do you mean?" said the Prince.

"Only that I have seen her. Gentlemen, we should claim the right of hospitality: there is just arrived a travelling carriage, from which, under the private escort of one of our host's confidential slaves, has just descended into his hall a fair foreigner, not only beautiful, but distractingly beautiful."

"Oh, he was going to meet her then."

"Come, I propose," said Jakof "that we toss up whether he shall present the lady to his chosen friends, or whether we let him off at once to enjoy her company alone."

"Your offer is very liberal," replied the Prince; "but I assure you, that my good fortune is unexpected." He addressed a question to one of his servants in a whisper.

"You know," said Jakof, "you cannot keep your light under a bushel in such a place as St. Petersburg."

"One may try," returned the Prince; "but who do you think she is, gentlemen? The foreign wife of one of those slaves whom my late father in his philanthropic mania educated and maintained abroad like noblemen, whilst I, his unfortunate son, was obliged to resort to every

imaginable expedient to keep the bailiffs from the door. I am charmed, truly, to hear so favourable an account of her beauty."

"I'll bet you all I won of you last night," said Jakof, "that she is either an Italian, or a Spaniard, or a Swede, or an Englishwoman."

"An Englishwoman! who ever heard of an Englishwoman marrying a slave!"

"Come, gentlemen," said the Prince, "I am off to the Yelagin, so good night to those who will not stay for supper; but I will peep as I go at my fair vassal."

"And I have a double claim to follow," said Jakof, "firstly as having made the discovery, and secondly because we ride together."

"Let us all see her," said one of the guests.

"Gentlemen," replied the Prince, "you forget my duties as her husband's proprietor; and then if she be not worth seeing, why should I shew her to you? If she be, I should feel sorry to scare her by the sight of so many strangers. Come, Jakof,—if I give him, gentlemen, an invidious preference, he has a claim which you have not in his personal appearance, for it is impossible to dread that he will win from me the smiles or approbation of the beautiful foreigner—if beautiful she be."

"Don't say the smiles," observed Lesseps, "if

she can look at Jakof without roars of laughter she must be the Goddess of Gravity, and she must wait till she sees him next winter, with two little gauze bags covering his ears; that's all."

Jakof had retorted on the Prince, not by a word, but by a little movement, which, imperceptible to the rest, had stung him to the quick; but having taken his leave, he snatched his hat and strode out whip in hand, Jakof following at his heels.

"In Dietrich's room, do you say?" asked the Prince of the groom of the chambers. "Fall back, we will go out that way into the yard to seek our horses."

And thus it was that the Prince Isaakoff and his companion came to intrude on the privacy of the steward's apartment.

When Blanche raised her head, when the eyes of Mattheus turned upon the Prince Isaakoff, and when his glance met theirs, they all three remained for an instant transfixed—for he recognized them, and they recognized in him the Ivan Ivanovitch of the Opera House! It was just, too, as Jakof, who came stumbling after him, fearful that the sarcasm conveyed by his gesture should pass unnoticed, exclaimed: "*You* talk of personal appearance; you, the man with the flattened nose! ha, ha! ha, ha!"

The vivid recollection of the indignity which he had sustained, and the ineffaceable mark which stamped for ever the humiliation of that hour, were thus brought forcibly before the master on his first meeting with the slave.

Nothing in the whole course of that eventful life, into which he had crowded, and in which he had wearied and exhausted so many sensations, had ever taken so strong a hold of the Prince Ivan Isaakoff's mind, as that long unsatisfied revenge thus placed so suddenly within his reach. And now he felt like one who has gone to sleep a beggar, to dream of inexhaustible wealth, or to rouse to the waking dream of life in its possession. He was embarrassed where to begin with his enjoyment. His dead and lead-like eyes spoke nothing, because no passion could light up their opacity; and yet in his whole deportment there was that unmistakeable air of withering superiority and of imperious triumph, that Blanche, quickened in her perception of horrors,—as she looked upon him and then upon Mattheus, whose head sunk despondingly upon his breast, as his fatalism came to prostrate the last energies of his heart and brain—knew instinctively that the Prince Ivan Isaakoff was the awful slave-master—the arbiter of her husband's fate.

"We have met before," said the Prince, ironically, to Mattheus, "come hither! Do you remember this?" and he raised his hand to his nose. "Thus, mark for mark!" and with all the power of his arm he cut him across the face with his horsewhip.

Then Blanche felt nervously disposed to close her eyes, for she doubted not to see her slave-husband, with all the despair of Spartacus, seize the puny Prince in his muscular arms, and dash his skull to pieces against the wall; although her colour came and went, she would probably have found relief in some fearful catastrophe, which might have put an end to the hopeless, ignominious horror of her fate.

But though the blow left a deep red scar, which was rapidly changing into dolphin hues, across those features which her enthusiastic fancy had often compared to the mythologic deities, Mattheus only bowed his head, and letting it sink submissively upon his bosom, folded his arms, and stood in ignoble deprecation of his tyrant's wrath.

"Fear nothing, Madam," said the Prince to Blanche, "I do but chastise the insolence of my slave."

Blanche's blood boiled. Oh, how she longed that the cool Neva had flowed before that

window! and, panting and bewildered, the only expression into which her features were visibly moulded, was that of an intensity of despair and of disgust.

"You will remember, Madam, that nothing but your presence saves him from further castigation; and that any mitigation of the punishment due to his insolence can only be obtained through your intercession for him."

"For him!" said Blanche, pointing to her husband with ineffable scorn. And then the wretched Mattheus indeed felt the iron entering into his soul; the cup of his misery, full before, ran over now.

Was it the supernatural endurance of one determined to make every human reparation possible, or was he awed into less than man by the instinctive terrors which become, by dint of transmission through so many generations, the debasing heritage of a line of slaves, when in the presence of their tyrants? Something of both the heroism of the martyr's winning patience and the bondsman's servile and desponding fear had been mingled in him, to make him play a part so gentle in a scene so harrowing.

"Madam," said the Prince, "those eyes recall to me that I have sunned myself before in their glances; you remember, perhaps, a certain pas-

sage respecting a rose-bud; by the by, let this bouquet pay you back a debt so sweet; as for this worthless slave, this pilfering merchant, and the thieving steward, I cannot leave you in their company. You will send that fellow to the stables and give his lady apartments; do you hear me, Dietrich."

"Hear *me!*" said Blanche, "if there be one of your accursed race more contemptible than another, I know not whether it is the brutal master or the crouching serf. But I am Blanche Mortimer, I, at least will fly far from the contamination and pollution into which my unpractised inexperience has led me." Here she threw down, and trampled on his nosegay. "Make way, let me pass, I charge you. I am not your slave!"

"Nay, there my indignant beauty," said the Prince, seizing her hand, "you are in error; by the Russian law, if a free woman marries my slave, she too becomes a slave, and you are mine."

"I!" said Blanche Mortimer, "good God!" and she sank upon the chair.

"Bravo," said Jakof, "she is very charming, but I knew directly I saw her, that she was an actress; ask her to let us see her foot."

CHAPTER IV.

GENTLE reader, did you ever see a fawn in an old park, mirroring itself in the glassy water, which reflects alike its graceful form, and the steady gaze of its full, soft hazel eyes?

Or have you ever watched as I have in an Alpine solitude, a young chamois, which has never yet been scared by the sight of a human form, standing on the brink of a blue mountain pool, and turning the liquid light of its orbs to mark its own image in the cold chaste wave, whose basin is the unthawed ice? If you have, you can the better imagine Nadeshta by the river's side, on a placid summer evening, thoughtfully scattering rose leaves on the shifting bosom of the stream, and harmonising so indescribably with the scene by the youth, and grace, and beauty, and timidity, which her figure and her attitude conveyed.

In their wild, happy freedom, there is a restless fearfulness which speaks in all the motions of the gentle deer tribe, who have only their vigilance, and their winged feet for their protection, and something of this too is in Nadeshta's glance and in her air. As she muses beside those deep, solitary waters, whose course, curving above and below where she is standing, seemed enclosed by bower-like wood and florid meadow, you might have fancied her Undine; but Undine with the inquietude of her earthly lover transfused into her own soft eyes. Is it love which gives those eyes that restless and mournful expression? For though it is the age of youthful mirth, it is the age too of love with her; and love draws tears like those which fall from them on the smooth sheet of the river's surface, where their circling ripples disturb the dimples of the eddy, amongst which the scattered fragments of the rose are floating leaf by leaf.

Oh! no—Nadeshta has never yet felt any love, but that for an absent brother—a brother, absent so long that this love is almost an ideal abstraction. But Nadeshta is a slave.

It is true that in yonder village, nay, along that very stream, throughout the happy summer, the merry song of other slave-girls resounds

from morn to night, awakening the birds with early day, and disturbing them as they sink to rest at even-tide. They are born so, and heed no more their sad condition than do the butterflies the killing and inevitable winter, as they flit so gaily from flower to flower, along the river's banks.

But Nadeshta, alas! has drunk of the fatal cup of knowledge:—the light of education has beamed in, to shew unto herself her desolate condition. The art of cunning men, which records immortally the stirring thoughts of others, together with the thoughts recorded, which paint, describe, instruct and move upon a page—made up from filthy rags, and charactered in signs of grease and ashes, the true type of those elements, whose gross corruption the human soul redeems—all these had given her glimpses of a vast and mighty world beyond, beautiful, and strange, and full of life. And this fatal knowledge had made it hers to love, abhor, and long and suffer, whilst her pitiless fate rooted her to the soil, like a tree to which these feelings might be given, whilst all power of action was hopelessly denied.

"Go!" thought Nadeshta, as the scattered rose leaves whirled slowly round in the eddy and then fleeted onwards. "Go! Float gently down

the stream! That stream leads to a river, and the river, to a free, illimitable ocean. Go! the breeze that wafts you gently with the current, hough it sweeps over the dark wood, and the sweltering marsh, and the dull monotonous village—still travelling on, in a few hours may roar amongst the life and change of stormy waters, or revel amidst golden lands, as it sighs through trelliced vines and marble palaces, and fountained gardens, or it may sweep through the crowded streets of cities, where genius, beauty, virtue, wit, and learning, stamp a human being's value, and where the high deeds and thoughts, the blood and the eloquence, of the brave, and generous, and gifted, whilst hallowing the scene, have made all free, and given a hope to all ambition. The swallow that skims so gracefully the water's surface, the birds that sing so joyously upon the branches around me, may all flit onward to happier climes and sunnier skies—they do not, because they are free, where Nadeshta is a slave. The very mist, that rises up at even from the slough of the damp wood and of the spongy morass, hurries in on the sweeping clouds, for the breeze which leaves Nadeshta weeping here, will help that vapour onwards, far, far away, to descend where it may list, in showers. All things

inanimate and animate seem to have a future and a hope—but I have none. And yet the nightingale, since foolish thing it stays, finds here a sojourn it loves as well as the orange groves of Spain or Italy. What matters it to the wind, whether it howl through a dark pine forest with the wolves, or ripple the blue Mediterranean? What cares the vapour whether it lie amongst the humid moss or sodden leaves of a Russian wood, or descend in dew on the opening roses of Stamboul? But I am not indifferent as the bird, or the wind, or the wave, or the vapour, for I have peeped into the world beyond the dull horizon which imprisons me. The artist's skill has shewn me the imagery of Greek and Roman ruined temples—sun-lit and reflected in blue waters; and the gay and statued gardens of the Tuileries, and the woodbined cottages of England, and seas where white sails, more numerous than the sea-mews, speck the distance and bustling sea-ports, and the wild Alps, and the smiling plains of Lombardy, and the beautiful vales of Switzerland with the chalets which stud them, looking like our own log dwellings, but where all are free and happy within. And I have read of the high destiny of man, where men have been and are heroes and sages, and where it is woman's glorious mission to inspire

them; where, as Grecian wife or Roman mother, the name of woman has won an immortality; where Chivalry in its romance has raised her on a pedestal and worshipped; or, where the burning odes and tender madrigals of poets and of lovers have been poured out to intoxicate her, like a bird's impassioned song.

"Alas! why do I know that such things are? that such scenes should invite and glow, and such men people them, for others, not for me? Ah, why was I made to know all this? Why? Oh, cruel benefactor! whose memory my reason curses and my affection holds so dear, why take Nadeshta like a cage-bred bird, and shew her the wild woods and the free meadows, and the glorious skies, and then forget to untie the string which binds her fluttering to her cage for ever, hopeless and alone?

"Alone!—alone!—alone!—For, oh! Mattvei, my brother!—the brother of whom thy Nadeshta is so proud—the brother for whose coming she hath longed, as the withering flowers long for rain!—can I wish thee, now, to come from the happy lands where thou art roaming free? to come within the limits, where the law fetters thee with chains, which have never been unbound, which a master's caprice may rivet, and in which thy noble heart would burst!

"Alone! alone and hopeless! it is Nadeshta's doom to live.

"Go! tears! the free-born of the slave-girl's weeping eyes! Her body is registered with the lands, the serfs, and the cattle of her Lord. Her heart is with Mattvei, and her thoughts and soul she will upraise to the Virgin Mother! So—go, my tears, and float free with the wild wave!

"For I know that there are men who acknowledge no master but their God, and, owning their own bodies as we do our thoughts and souls, struggle for honourable wealth and fame, cheered by the smiles of those they love, and attaining them by the noble road of good done to their fellow-men; not as with us, by cringing to the agent's agent of a Lord, who in his turn trembles at his Tsar's name, like the grey hare in the wood when startled by the rustling leaves. I know there are such men, and nightly do I dream of them, full of high beauty, with open noble brows and fearless eyes, which have never learned to quail since they were opened to the light; valiant, and chivalrous, and feeling, and full of all that soft devoted tenderness and gentle delicacy, which must be to love like the gay powder on the wings of the bright butterfly, without which it sinks into the dust and dies.

"I dream of them, in some lilac walk, or

next the fountain of a citron grove, upon their bended knees as lovers; and then the dream vanishes and I awake in my dull village. There is the sordid steward and his family, and there pass by my fellow slave-girls singing thoughtlessly, destined to become the wives of coarse and brutal men, to tremble beneath the lash of husbands drunk with vodka on the Sunday, when unyoked from their weekly toil, and trembling on the Monday in their turn beneath the Oupravitel's lash—all counted and regarded like the master's cattle; and as without a hope, so almost without a wish for aught, save to eat, and drink, and sleep, and to escape from blows."

It was many years ago that Nadeshta, with her orphan brother, wandering along that very river in search of mushrooms, had first attracted the notice of Prince Isaakoff.

The Prince was of a disposition so notoriously benevolent, that when his wealth, and the absolute power of a Russian landed proprietor over his serfs is considered, it is difficult to believe that his forty thousand peasants were not as happy as ever falls to the lot of humanity; but unluckily, boundless authority and unlimited benevolence do not suffice, unless united to firmness and activity, to ensure the well-being of fellow-men committed to a single individual's

charge. Whilst his life was spent in philanthropic plans, his agents, who humoured his fancy, still managed somewhat to oppress his people, because he had, like the Emperor Alexander, the amiable but unfortunate weakness, of wishing, at any cost, to see nothing around him but happy faces.

Now it was equally difficult both for the Emperor and for the land-holder to bring smiles into the faces of favourites and land-stewards whom they saw daily, excepting at the price of tears, drawn from the eyes of those remote from their notice. But at least all of his serfs and dependents, who by any chance came under the Prince Isaakoff's notice, were cared for with the solicitude of one whose large heart, redeeming his little mind, had learned to seek its whole happiness in the happiness of others.

He was struck with the beauty of these two little slave children, whom he had never seen before; and when, in a sudden shower, they took refuge under his cloak and related to him, with artless simplicity, their forlorn and orphan condition, he determined to be to them rather the natural protector they had lost than the master whom his birth had made him.

They were taken into his house, and served together with his dwarf and his Newfoundland-

dog to amuse his hours of melancholy leisure. Their infantine graces gradually won still further upon his affections, and the more readily from the contrast between their dispositions and that of his only son, a sickly youth, whose malignant temper might have given any father uneasiness, but was a source of ceaseless unhappiness to the Prince Isaakoff, who seemed to have united in his own bosom the kindliness of two individuals, and his wayward child—unredeemed by one good quality—to have combined more than the malevolence of any two ordinary characters.

The young Ivan, who was named after his father, but according to the universal Russian custom, with his father's name appended to his own, which made it Ivan Ivanovitch, (or John, the son of John,) was one day lashing with his tiny whip a little peasant whom he had hunted into a corner, when the boy Mattvei, bold in the Prince's favouritism, stayed his hand. And then, with all his childish passions of jealousy and hatred roused, the young heir, seizing a heavy hatchet, had fractured Mattvei's skull.

From that time the Prince became more and more estranged from his own offspring, and looked on his protection towards Mattheus as a duty. He had already educated many of his

serfs, maintained them at universities, and brought them up as doctors, architects, or artists, furnishing them afterwards with a capital to start in life. He had, by his protection and assistance, raised many others to the condition of thriving shopkeepers or wealthy merchants. But for Mattvei he determined to do something more. Not only was he sent early to the university of Dorpat, where his name—for the slave had no name but his Christian name of Matthew or Mattvei—was latinized—according to the custom of northern pedantry, into Mattheus, which passed well enough for a patronymic.

From Dorpat his affectionate protector sent him to travel abroad; for the Emperor Nicholas had not yet issued the ukase which, under pain of confiscation of property and still severer penalties, forbids any Russian subject, not a nobleman, to remain more than one year out of the empire, or the nobleman more than three—that is to say, in the few instances in which foreign passports are not altogether denied.

The instructions of Mattheus were simply to travel, to collect objects of art and virtu for the Prince, and to cultivate those literary or artistic tastes which he might feel inclined to indulge. The allowance which the benevolent Lord made to his favourite serf was such

as would have done credit to the liberality of a sovereign; and, when Mattheus returned to him the surplus, he laid it aside and allowed it to accumulate into a fund which would secure him a handsome independence, and to which his generosity was constantly adding.

But there was one point on which the conduct of the good slave-master was strangely contradictory, for, whilst it was the dearest wish of his heart to secure the happiness of such of his slaves as had attracted his particular notice, and whilst he was perfectly sensible of the inestimable value of freedom, which he had never dreamed of eventually withholding, he could never readily bring himself to part with the controul which his position gave him over them, even after his arguments had ceased to persuade himself that he could exercise it as a means of salutary and restrictive parental controul. Then, when he had settled in his own mind the fitness of their immediate enfranchisement, he would put off the necessary steps for a month or two, or reserve the gift for a sudden and pleasant surprise to those on whom he intended to bestow it.

Hence with Mattheus, who knew the feeling of his master, it became a matter of delicacy not to press on his indulgence, though

he knew that he could always so far count upon it as to insure receiving whenever he should ask it, his manumission at his hands.

Meanwhile the Prince Isaakoff did not neglect Nadeshta. She was sent as a relative of the family to a fashionable French school at Moscow, where she was instructed in every branch of female accomplishment, and of course became a proficient in the French, the language of every Russian drawing-room.

But an absence of several years, without diminishing the benevolence of the Prince's intentions towards her, had partially weaned his affection, and enabled him to perceive her growth into womanhood, and the injurious rumours to which her residence with an unmarried protector might give rise. He therefore established her in the family of the resident land-steward of his estate, until such time as her brother should return and take her under his own roof, whilst her manumission he had always put off until that of Mattheus should take place. It thus happened that, between grateful delicacy on the one side, and procrastination on the other, death had overtaken the Prince in the midst of good intentions unfulfilled.

CHAPTER V.

When Xerxes, with his hosts as numerous as the sand of the sea-shore had signally failed in subduing a handful of freemen, and when one name was indissolubly bound up in glorious connection with this great failure, the rankling recollection of which the tyrant strove to drown in the bubbling wine-cup—the monarch, pursuing in his sleep the all-absorbing thought of his waking hours, is said to have exclaimed, "I hold him! I hold Themistocles the Athenian!"

And so the Prince Ivan Isaakoff awoke from a feverish dream, crying aloud, as he leapt energetically on his feet from his sofa, "I hold him! I hold him!"

Themistocles did not occupy the thoughts of the Persian King more incessantly than the stranger of the opera-house had recurred to the indignant recollection of the Prince. And the

Athenian was less in the Persian monarch's power than the slave Mattheus in that of his malignant master. Xerxes, too, was ambitious, and restricted by considerations of his king-like fame, whilst at best his great supplicant had made him arbiter of his present and of his future, for he had no power over his glorious past—that past into whose memory everything resolves itself—which the folly of psuedo proverb-making sapience despises, but which true wisdom esteems as the only certain and unchangeable good, which no caprice of fortune can alter or take from us.

But the Prince Ivan had no ambition to usurp the place of vengeance in his mind, where no considerations arose to restrain its exercise, whilst Mattheus, whose life had hitherto been rather a hope of the future on which he was entering, than an enjoyment of any present which made a satisfying past, was thus placed with his whole existence in his power. For every human destiny the thread of which is not untimely broken, or which does not close in that barrenness which all men unconsciously struggle to avoid, will be found to consist of a period of action and of one of passiveness; the latter filled up by hope when it precedes, and by grateful remembrance when it follows, the life of fruition. But then the positive past resembles

the golden fruits of autumn; there is no keen wind which can now prevent that maturity which is reached; but when the early portion of existence is spent in hopes, the cutting blast sweeps them all for ever from the tree, and when they fall there is nothing to garner up and satisfy and fill the soul.

Is not this the reason of that moral phenomenon, which makes the wretch to whom life has been a step-mother still cling to it with desperate energy, whilst those who have lived in the enjoyment of pleasure or prosperity, or gratified ambition, are seen to relinquish it with comparative indifference?

Now Mattheus, year after year, had looked forward to the period of his promised manumission, which he considered as his real entrance into life. He had studied, he had treasured up knowledge, he had embued himself with the learning, the ideas, and the sentiments of the great and good—not as things with which the slave had anything to do—but to be used in this new life of freedom on which he was about to enter. And this entrance it was in the power of the Prince Ivan utterly and for ever to bar; thus making the past a blank, a chaos of blasted hopes and ruined aspirations, whilst he remained beside the supreme and cruel arbiter of his present fate and future destiny.

For many years past, the Prince had felt a feverish and intense desire for that sensation of excitement, which he could so rarely find to stimulate his palled appetite and torpid feelings. It had come at length in the form of hatred. But as, in those nervous diseases, where the patient longs for change to some definite sensation, though it be even to suffering—and thirst comes—though thirst be change, it is only change of pain, till the deep draught is upraised to allay its cravings. The draught was there. But, as it had come so unexpectedly, he determined to waste no portion of that for which he had longed so ardently by his impatience or imprudence; and, therefore, whilst he looked in the cheval glass at his broken nose, he bethought himself that both Mattheus and his wife, like all other travellers, must have given their names at the gate on entering the capital, and that they would therefore be obliged to present themselves within three days at the office of the secret police, where all persons newly arrived from abroad, whether strangers or Russians, must undergo a strict examination.

He therefore judged it expedient to let this interview pass before he took any step which might render either the slave or his wife so desperate as to appeal to the grand-master of the high or secret police.

Not that they would have met with any eventual assistance, although it happens to be the avowed object of this institution to give redress in those cases which the laws do not profess to reach. But then such a complaint would afford this Russian Holy-Office a delightful opportunity for nibbling at his property; for, if it would not prevent his "doing as he liked with his own," yet, in consideration of his million of yearly revenue, it would make him pay handsomely for this luxury. He therefore summoned Dietrich, who was told to release Mattheus from the stable in which he was confined, and to intimate to him that his master's vengeance was satisfied, and that he would be allowed to negociate for his freedom.

"And, in fact," added the Prince, "suppose that this morning I were to sign the freedom of Vasili Petrovitch—he offers me five and twenty thousand roubles, and, though one might get more out of him—you have rated him, I see, at forty—the fellow is apoplectic, he might slip his wind, and do me altogether. You can hold that out to Mattheus as a bait. Let us see who is the next upon the list. Oh! one of my father's protégés, a bachelor of arts of the University of Heidelberg, brought up to the medical profession, offers a beggarly ten thousand

roubles. It will not do: I'll keep him for a house-doctor. And then there is Rouguenieff, who humbly offers seven thousand roubles. The rascal! Is that the wealthy fishmonger?"

"Oh, no! my high well-born master," answered the obsequious Dietrich. "Rouguenieff would not offer so much to be free; he has made money lately, but he turns round, and refuses to pay his debts."

"Ah, I understand!" exclaimed the Prince; "since a slave is not liable for more than a debt of five shillings, he would prefer not to be free just now. Send him to me to-morrow, and tell him I *will* give him his liberty, unless he can show me a substantial argument to the contrary. I dare say it is provoking to thee, Dietrich; but thou seest I know the exact value of my flock, from which to take the fleece, and from which the milk, and from which the hide!"

Dietrich had not obeyed the orders of his master to the letter; instead of confining Mattheus in a stable, he shut him in a room formerly belonging to the stallmeister, or director of the stable, to the late Prince, who of late years had left the office unfilled in his establishment. For, in the first place, Dietrich had always been perfectly aware of the old Prince's affection for his slave, and he never entertained a doubt

either of his manumission whenever he should return, or of his being able to obtain, if he desired it, so entire an influence over his weak benefactor as to assume the entire management of his affairs, and to be able to command as a freeman to any extent the resources of his immense fortune. He had, therefore, considered it politic to ingratiate himself as much as possible with Mattheus by offers of service and protestations of friendship, which he increased when the conduct and letters of the absentee showed that, with the education of a gentleman, he had imbibed or affected an indolent indifference to his pecuniary interests.

"My dear child," wrote the old Prince to him a week before he died, "the child of my affections, if not of my blood. At length I must call thee back; long, very long, I have struggled between the desire of having thee with me and the advantage to thee of thy foreign sojourn, of which I am fully conscious. But I have been now long suffering—not that I believe my malady dangerous—and I am growing an old man; my spirits are low, very low, and I cannot resist the selfish temptation of recalling my dear son to cheer me with his presence; for, though I have many children whom I consider as such, and though I have one who bears my name and

will occupy my station, and who has my forgiveness and good wishes, thou knowest well, dear Mattheus, that thou art still the first-born of my heart. I am still kindly tended by the good, honest Dietrich. I do not think that he understands affairs, but he joins in all my little plans of philanthropy, and he loves me well, and so he does thee, my boy. He writes to thee respectfully himself, inclosing the letter from thy dear sister, Nadeshta, who is still with the family of Dietrich's brother, at the Bialoi-Darevnia, and from whence thou shalt fetch her as soon as thou arrivest."

Now, though it was true that the Prince's death and the animosity of this present heir against Mattheus had utterly changed this state of things, yet Dietrich had been on such terms with the latter as rendered it difficult for him to disavow all sympathy with his misfortune. And then Dietrich had been made the confidant of the marriage of Mattheus with a beautiful and wealthy foreigner; and although he knew that the large sum which the late Prince had laid aside as the portion of his virtually adopted slave had been quietly confiscated by his successor, with many other sums intended for similar purposes, still, in right of his wife, he was possessed of other resources, of which

Dietrich might reasonably hope that his position would allow him to take advantage.

The frame and constitution of Mattheus were of that enduring organization which nature, fitting the back to the burthen, seems to have bestowed upon all human races long enslaved; just as, in the animal kingdom, it has protected the camel's knees by callosities and the hide of the patient ass by insensibility. But his strong and vigorous body, though unimpaired, showed all the traces of having struggled with a mind intensely sensitive, wrought up to madness, but to which insensibility had not given relief, his bodily strength having held his mind, as it were, at the stake, to prevent its escape into unconsciousness from the agony of one single pang.

His eyes were red and protruding; and, if his hair had not grown grey in that single night, which he had spent in pacing up and down, his features had taken an expression of which some of the lines were so indelibly stamped, that they could never be effaced by any smiles—if for him the uncertain future had any smiles in store.

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When education had thrown open to the enthusiastic mind of Mattheus the past history and the contemporary position of his fellow-men, he had felt, like his sister Nadeshta, a deep and humiliating sense of his degradation; and

his subsequent years of study and of travel, his contemplation of antiquity, his examination of the struggles of men for freedom and enlightenment through every age, and his visits to the very spots hallowed as the cradles of philosophy and liberty with their attendant arts and sciences, or, distinguished as the battle-fields on which they had struggled in their adolescence, or dignified by the triumphant reign of their still inexperienced manhood—all this had imbued him with an admiration of what was most extreme in the wildest and most impracticable theories of those, whose noble error dreamed an impossible liberty and equality. And, at the same time, whilst this appreciation taught him the double and complicated ignominy of his position as the bondsman of a man who himself was not free, it is scarcely to be wondered at that his hatred of all oppression grew intemperate and intense.

The time arrived when Mattheus identified himself in feeling and in wishes only with those who, by bold and bloody acts, had struck down tyrants in the zenith of their power; and the dream of his ambition had been, not for power, or wealth, or fame, but only for one successful hour of the lives of Thrasybulus, of Brutus, or of William Tell; and who, that in England talked twenty years ago of Church and King,

and an inalterable Constitution, knows in what morbid thirst of vengeance his energies might have centered, if consciously placed in a position lower than that of the negro slave, as Mattheus was, being, like every Russian serf, the slave of an enslaved master?

Now his acquaintance with Blanche and the love with which she inspired him, whilst it left his convictions unaltered and his predilections unenfeebled, giving a new aim and object to his ambition, taught him to forget his wild democratic longings, in the hope of enjoying individual independence and personal happiness with her.

If, on their journey to St. Petersburg, Mattheus had laboured under presentiments which happened to be afterwards unfortunately realized, there had been, notwithstanding this instinctive misgiving, no reasonable cause to doubt the success of all his plans. They had been overturned by two of those rare and consecutive accidents, against the occurrence and combination of which no human foresight can ever provide, and the complicated fatality of which might, in almost any situation of life, have deranged the most cautiously concerted project. It required the singular and successive ill fortune of losing his generous patron, when six weeks more of life would have sufficed to crown his

wishes, and of meeting with a master in the very man he had chastised.

When, therefore, these strange mischances did occur, Mattheus, notwithstanding the vague preparation of his forebodings, did not the less feel all his energies prostrated by the unexpected death of the old Prince, his benefactor, and by finding himself so utterly in the power of a man whom he had mortally offended.

So sudden and so terrible were these successive blows, that all the pride of the enthusiast, all the magnificent resolutions of years, and all the temper which he thought his character had taken from his long contemplation and his vivid sense of man's natural right and the slave's individual wrongs, gave way together. Instead of the edge, and elasticity, and hardness of the tempered steel, which struggles against, or breaks, unyielding in the grasp, or wounds the hand that tries to bend it; before this unexpected fate he felt himself bowed like a springless bar of softened unresisting iron. And then at the same time there flashed across his mind one of those terrible doubts, which had occasionally and at intervals assailed it, a doubt which more frequently and more fatally crosses the mind of the bondsman than he cares to avow everywhere.

" Are there not, perhaps," he thought, " certain races which nature has doomed to servitude,

to which in vain the noblest aspirations may be given, since they are always destined at the eleventh and decisive hour to find their will and courage fail?"

Thus, after so many years' absence, during which he had learned to look with loathing and contempt alike upon the submission of the serfs and the tyranny of their servile tyrants, when he found himself suddenly placed in a position, in which he would formerly have laid down so many plans of desperate action, he felt himself as much overawed and overwhelmed as the Cimbrian slave when he quailed in the presence of Marius.

From this sickening despondency he was awakened, not by the lash of the Prince's horsewhip across his cheek, but by the haughty contempt spoken at once from eyes and lips which he had never heard or seen before expressing aught but words and looks of admiration, love, and tenderness.

This indeed aroused him to the full vivacity of his mental energy, as suddenly and agonisingly as the searing iron applied to the torpid nerves awakes them from their lethargic stupor; and in this frame of mind he had been confined by Dietrich in the apartment in which he had spent the night.

His first impulse was a harrowing regret that the past hour was not again before him, a delirious longing for the next opportunity which would bring him face to face again with the Prince Isaakoff. In imagination, he had seized the sickly tyrant and strangled him by twisting the embroidered cravat about his neck; he had grasped him in his Herculean arms, and, notwithstanding the interference of Dietrich and of the foolish Jakof, for he was fully conscious of his own extraordinary power of muscle, he would have thrown the crushed and bruised carcase, whose ribs would have collapsed and broken as in the embraces of a bear, all lifeless and disjointed at the feet of Blanche. Would she then have given him that look of disdain? And, after all, he could only have died; and did he now deliberately dream of living?

But then again he thought what would be her fate—would she not become the property of some distant and unknown inheritor of Isaakoff's fortune? Her too he had dragged into an abyss, from which there was no honourable escape but death; it was true that her deep blue eyes, the eyes which seemed to him to reflect the hues of Heaven, he had seen enthusiastically kindle, when she had heard or read of lovers dying together; and he could fancy how, if he

had snatched down one of the Asiatic scimetars or yatagans, which lined the walls and stabbed her to the heart, instead of that withering look of contempt, her face would have worn the expression of the dying daughter of Virginius, where the marble struggles with death and with affectionate pride, as the father holds up the reeking knife to Heaven, which he has just plunged into his daughter's bosom. For that one act—however degradingly, a master's heel might before have trampled him in the dust—that one act would have raised him from infamy to the sublimity of heroism; and that act he was now in his exaltation eager to accomplish. But, alas! how keenly he felt that, just as it is not merely the brilliancy of the thought or the language in which the idea is arrayed, which constitutes eloquence, without the à-propos of its delivery, so the want of à-propos in resolution and in action had changed the only good which fortune had left him—her love and admiration—into loathing and contempt, whilst, alike for both, in either case, there was nothing—but to die!

And then he gnashed his teeth to think that, by the irresolution of that hour, he had perhaps lost even the power of saving her by death from a fate too horrible to think on.

The past, however, was irretrievable; and, as

he looked towards the future, he was determined, at the first opportunity which should bring him into the presence of his tyrant, be it in an hour, or in a day, or in a week, to take a terrible revenge for the indignities he had suffered—for the life whose happiness was blasted—and to perish, dealing death and terror round him.

Then Blanche could only pity, or at worst hate, but not despise him: the fury of the overloaded camel, the venom of the trampled reptile, are full of terror; and the lowliest slave, when desperation guides his reeking knife, rises at once from the contemptible to the fearful, even in his master's estimation.

It is true that, by a common effect of long and utter servitude upon a race not naturally excitable, even when the prospects which life held forth were so intolerable that he dreamed no longer of living, still the irresistible awe which he felt of the oppression, to which he and his fathers had been born, would have caused him rather to steal out of life, rather to have terminated his existence in some obscure and sulky corner, with all the hatred of his despair fierce in the last palpitations of his heart, than to break openly and boldly away from life and its unendurable bonds, involving, like the dying Sampson, his enemies in a common ruin.

But then the remembrance of the contemp-

tuous look and words of Blanche, lashed on his resolution, like the scorpion scourge of the avenging Furies, into that degree of terrible fixity, which betrays itself not by heat and fury, but by its cool and stony immobility, like the lava, which, boiling and molten, may waste or scatter itself abroad or change its course; but which, once cold and hardened, retains eternally its bent and form.

In this humour, hour passed after hour and found Mattheus. His arms were proudly crossed upon his breast, his head was raised in a loftier attitude, as he paced up and down the solitary apartment, of which Dietrich had taken the key, and it was evident that, as his thoughts recurred to the examples of antiquity which he was about to follow, he had risen in his self-estimation, like a slave, who had cast aside the habit of his servitude, to drape himself in the tunic or the toga of a stern republican of ancient Rome.

But, as he paced up and down the place of his confinement, his eye, (which had rested for the hundredth time on a little picture, the deep, gilt, gaudy frame of which glittered in the light of the lamp suspended before it,) suddenly conveyed to the mind the meaning of the object towards which his glance had been so often mechanically directed.

It was an image of the Virgin and her God-born child, set forth, not by the genius of art, by a Raphael, a Guido, or a Carlo Dolce, but in the hideously orthodox portraiture of the barbarous artists of a barbaric people. The faces soiled by time and encased by tawdry splendour, were in themselves grotesque; but, in the mind, or, perhaps it should be said, in the heart of Mattheus, the sight awakened a long dormant train of ideas and feelings. It was before a similar image that he last remembered kneeling with his mother — a good pious peasant woman—with his infant sister Nadeshta in her arms! And thus it recalled that beloved sister, who so many years had been looking forward to their meeting, and who had regarded him as her living hope of being extricated from a position like his own, in which he alone could console her, and whom he must now leave unprotected. It recalled his thoughts from the stern Pagan virtues to the duties of love, as a beautiful image of that most universal abstraction of all selfish feeling—the love of the mother for her child! It recalled the sublime and distinctive doctrines of Christianity, with its utter self-sacrifice; and thus by degrees the absorbing ideas of his outraged dignity as a man, and of the gratification of his revenge,

which appeared so noble beside the submission of the crouching slave, in its turn gave place in his mind to a sense of the sublimity of self-denial and of suffering for those we love.

Then first, really forgetting self, he began to turn over in his mind whether any possible plan, whether the endurance of any possible degree of human degradation or suffering, could save her whom he had drawn into this fearful situation from the fate that awaited her; and, when he had turned it over in his mind, a hope and light broke in upon him, and he resolved—to live!

His first duty, his first and fondest wish, was to save the generous, confiding, and enthusiastic wife, who had been so fearless of uniting her fate to poverty or misfortune, but who had found misfortune and ignominy.

Having still the resource of Blanche's fortune, he was not without hope that, by a sacrifice of a portion of it, he might still be able to contrive her escape from the country. And to accomplish this he determined to submit to any humiliation, suffering, or contumely, which the wrath or malice of the Prince Isaakoff might heap upon him. He resolved to endure it, whether or not his injured wife should appreciate the depth of his expiatory sacrifice. For, perhaps, she might

only look upon it, after all, as resulting from the pitiful spirit of the hereditary bondsman!

The dread of this interpretation was perhaps the bitterest part of his anticipated trial; for it seemed to him then that there was nothing which he should not find strength to undergo, did he but know that Blanche was aware of all he was now suffering to repair the unintentional injury which he had done her.

Now the projects he had formed, and which he resolved to modify according to circumstances, required indispensably two things: in the first place, that he should contrive to see Blanche speedily, and persuade her, as the only means of enabling him to carry out his views of saving her, to affect a serious illness. When, therefore, Dietrich, with many expressions of condolence and of sympathy, came to relieve him from his durance, and to assure him both that the Prince's wrath was appeased, and that by his (Dietrich's) management, the manumission of his friend would probably be obtained for a reasonable price, although Mattheus was not deceived as to the intentions of his master regarding him, at all events he saw in his present leniency the means of taking the first steps towards fulfilling his designs. As to his wife, Dietrich assured him that there was

no objection to his seeing her forthwith, and that she had been so well taken care of that, even at that moment, the house-doctor was with her, and in fact, by a singular fatality, the illness which Mattheus intended to persuade her to feign, had overtaken her, and it was of a very serious nature. When he rejoined her, she was, as she had been for many hours, delirious.

After spending uninterruptedly two hours by her side, during which, in her incoherent ravings, she gave no signs of recognition, he was at last reminded by Dietrich that he was expected by the Prince that morning to present himself at the office of the secret police, taking with him a doctor's certificate of his wife's inability to attend.

Now the first steps of Mattheus were not to the office of the police, but up the crowded Nevsky Prospect, the principal street of the metropolis, along which he continued for a couple of miles, until, reaching the part where its glories and magnificence begin to fade, and the brilliant aspect of the European capital to merge into the Oriental city, he stopped before the vast bazaar called the Gostinoi Dvor.

The Gostinoi Dvor is a large square building, presenting the external aspect of a double

covered gallery, one story surmounting the other, and showing, through its long range of small arches, a row of cells on each floor. These cells are the shops and warehouses of some thousands of bearded shop-keepers, who have not their dwellings but merely their places of business here. Some are now glass-windowed, and have assumed the appearance of other European shops; but most of them are still quite open, and have nothing to secure them from the inclemency of the air but the heavy iron plated doors and shutters, which are barred up at night, when the tenants of these cells retire.

Mattheus passed onward, pressing through the motley crowd, which, circulating beneath the piazza, relieved by its bustle the gloomy, massive, and prison-like appearance of the building; and, resisting all the seductions of the itinerant venders of cold tea, caviar, and pickled lampreys, established under the protection of the arches of the ground-floor, and the solicitations of the shopkeepers or their assistants, as pressing as those of the old clothes-men, who about certain lanes and alleys of London, formerly seized the passenger by the skirt of his coat, as if they could secure his custom by impeding the progress of his person,

at length he paused before the shop or store of Vasili Petrovitch. It was an open shop, and lengths of cloth and stuffs, hanging from the ceiling, indicated that it was dedicated to the trade in drapery. Within it was a red-haired youth, with a slight nascent beard, his hair parted in the middle, and clad in a caftan, which, being lined with the inferior reddish refuse of the fox-skin, was left open, displaying a very coarse and dirty shirt, under a greasy sky-blue satin stock, besprinkled with rose-buds, and ornamented with a mosaic gold pin; the two last mentioned articles being an ingraftment of foreign elegance on his Muscovite costume.

At his feet was a samovar, the national bright brass tea urn, with its central chimney and little charcoal furnace beneath it, to ignite which it is placed in the draught of the open air.

The attention of the youth seemed divided between watching the progress of the urn and the progress of a repast in the inner shop, at which seven or eight men were seated, all the while not forgetting at intervals to recommend in a loud voice to the passengers the wares which he was placed there to watch, until relieved and allowed to take his turn at the banquet table.

When Mattheus, marking the number, decidedly paused before the door, the shopman, making a low bow and placing the supposed customer between himself and the shop, so that he could hardly escape until he had time to try all his powers of persuasion upon him, exclaimed in the most insinuating tones, "Hail to you, my Lord, what is your pleasure?"

"Tell me, brother," replied Mattheus, "is Vasili Petrovitch within?"

"That is he," said the lad pointing to one of the group at the table, and Mattheus at once entered the shop.

Here, with five other bearded men, Vasili Petrovitch had patriarchally taken his seat. One wore a new sheepskin coat looking like a robe of the inside of a soiled white kid glove, and another a garment of the same kind which had grown black and greasy with time, and which, perhaps, as well as his under-clothing, had never been removed excepting when he took his weekly bath, since eighteen months ago, when he first donned it in its virgin purity of hue. The others, like Vasili Petrovitch, were clad in dark green cloth caftans, which were naturally cooler than the fur-lined garments, and shewed to the practised eye of Mattheus a distinction of rank,

being assumed by the peasant; whereas the trader, or even the traders' assistant, may be considered to have entered the burgher class.

The strong smell of cabbage indicated that, as usual, in the form of soup, or of pirogi, (pies,) it had formed the staple article of their repast; but, at that moment, having disposed of the coarse elements which were intended to satisfy the grosser cravings of appetite, they were discussing that portion of their meal, which, evidently, by the intense relish with which they swallowed it, was gratifying to the Epicurean tastes of their nature.

The master and his men, each armed with a wooden spoon, were supping up a dark liquid from a wooden bowl, alternately with these instruments and by dipping in it a crust of bread. A foreigner would have thought it to be treacle, or some kind of posset; but Mattheus at once knew it to be the refuse or unclarified hemp-seed oil, of the strong taste of which the rancid smell emitted by it gave evidence. The master dipped in his spoon gravely, and his messmates waited deferentially till he had done so; and then amongst themselves there seemed to ensue a scramble as to who should first plunge in his spoon, or soak up with his bread the largest quantity of the rapidly diminishing dainty.

With a last hasty gulp, on hearing himself named, Vasili Petrovitch started up, and with a servile bow surveyed the new comer, and finding that he did not know him he exclaimed:

"*Sto vam ugodne*—what is your pleasure, my Lord?"

"What, Vasili Petrovitch, do you not remember me? Do you not recall Mattvei Mattveitch?"

"Mattvei Mattveitch! whom I have danced upon my knee? Mattvei Mattveitch who arrived last night? Hail and welcome, and thank God, my son, that I once more embrace you."

And Vasili Petrovitch, whose moustaches and beard were reeking with the oil, embraced him by throwing his arms around his neck and kissing him upon the cheeks, and lips, and eyes. And then he wiped from them all the grease which they had not discharged on the new comer's face, partly with his fingers and partly upon his sleeve, and invited him to sit down to his meal.

The habits of the drawing-room for twenty years, and of ten years of travel, had so far civilised the stomach of the educated slave that he unhesitatingly declined this invitation, and, the repast being at length concluded, Vasili Petrovitch dismissed his shopmen and servants

from the inner-room, and began loudly to condole with his guest on his disgrace, with which he was already acquainted.

"Ah! Mattvei Mattveitch! so much for foreign learning and foreign ways. Thou wert brought up, Mattvei, to enter upon manhood with a tailed coat like a real blagorodie (nobleman,) besides I know not what fine learning and a shaven chin! Ah! Mattvei Mattveitch! what has it advanced thee? For truly it seemeth to me that the wisdom departeth with the beard.

"I have thriven, and our forefathers have thriven, and my gossips thrive, with our old Muscovite maxims and our long Muscovite beards; but this will not suit the young. In this very Dvor there are scores of merchants' sons and youthful merchants who ape the foreigners in their dress and language, and do they prosper? No: one by one they are bankrupts, and so it has been with thee, my poor Mattvei Mattveitch. But tell me—our old Lord, who is in Heaven, loved thee as dearly as a son, and the sixty thousand silver roubles which he destined thee might as well be in the hands of a tribunal of justice for any chance thou ever hast of getting *that;* but surely he has laid by elsewhere many and many a round sum where Ivan Ivanovitch cannot get at it." And old Vasili, who ever since the allusion he had made unto

beards was still complacently stroking down his own, peered cunningly into the face of his guest.

"No alas !" said Mattheus, "he was so like a father to me, Vasili Petrovitch, that I trusted everything to him."

"Ay," said Vasili, "just so. There is the folly of youth departing from the wisdom of its forefathers. If thou hast wheaten rusks and salmon pies, and thou wishest to continue to have wheaten rusks and salmon pies to eat, then before thy Lord thou shalt eat black bread and salt as long as thou art his serf, and when thou hast purchased thyself free of his servitude then every rusk and every pie of which thou wishest not the Emperor's chenovniks to devour the half, thou shalt still eat between four friendly walls. To be sure our late master—may his soul repose in peace!—was the kindest and the best of Lords. 'Vasili Petrovitch, Vasili Petrovitch,' he was wont to say, 'why hidest thou thy wealth from me, the wealth which I should be so pleased to hear of, and from which thou knowest that I would not take the value of one kopek?' But still I always answered him: 'My father, I am poor, my good Lord, men belie me. I trade largely, but I am very poor.' Trust to the goodness of thy patron saint, and to the security of the hiding-place where the

money is hidden—but not to God or man, or to the Emperor. God is too high, and the Emperor is too far off, and man is too changeable and too mortal. This old wisdom of our unlettered fathers I have followed, thou hast not; now mark the sequel. All the kind wishes of the earthly patron on which thou hast relied—his good intentions and his love—they are in Heaven with him, and thou, my poor Mattvei, art left here. But I—I have done very differently. I cannot read, 'tis true; but, by seeming poor, and by wearing my patched caftan, and by depending not even on the best of masters, I have managed to obtain my freedom and secure my fortune, for to-morrow I shall be free, Mattvei Mattveitch! free! free! free!"

"Indeed!" said Mattheus, "is it sure?"

"Ay, free as the birds of the air, and so sure that—you see this little packet; well, in it are five hundred roubles done up to give the Quartalne, (police chief of the quarter,) for, of course, when one is free and has wandered from the shelter of a rich master's wing, the police expect more for their protection."

"Ah," said Mattheus bitterly, "I see; if he were not reasonably propitiated he would heap all sorts of annoyances on thee; send for thee

daily to his office, and send thee away unheard; keep thee a week waiting for thy passport, when thou wishest to go twenty miles; and perhaps find a pretext to flog thee and to make thee sweep the street, unless thou wouldst, at double the expense, bribe those above him."

"Ay! God only knows," said Vasili, "what he might not do; but who that has money ever tries?"

"And this," mused Mattheus, "is what is called here freedom, and even such freedom do I now look forward to with envy! Well, I congratulate thee, Vasili Petrovitch; and then wilt thou still have a heart for those that were thy fellow-slaves?"

"The heart does not change with the condition; my brethren will still be my brethren. But, tell me, is there anything in which I can serve thee? Art thou quite poor as well as so unfortunate as to have incurred the wrath of Ivan Ivanovitch?"

And on this Mattheus explained to him his position. With somewhat of that very instinct of his race in which Vasili Petrovitch seemed to think him so deficient, he had converted the entire fortune of his wife into money, and had long carried it about him. It is true it was in English bank-notes, all Russian money whether in paper or in specie being forbidden to be

exported on pain of confiscation, on its reintroduction, which of course renders it unattainable in any foreign country. Now the first object of Mattheus was to obtain a place of asylum for his wife during her illness; his second, was to deposit his money in a place of security, ignorant as he was of what fate his master might have reserved for him; and his third, to endeavour to provide the means of her escape upon her convalescence.

"Mattvei Mattveitch," said Vasili, "you have chosen an unfortunate moment to crave my assistance; for now, being a freeman, I am about openly to extend the speculations I have carried on, and therefore I shall not only have much more to engage my attention; but, I need not tell you, when a man is reputed rich, what risks he runs in interfering between the master and the slave."

"Risk! Vasili Petrovitch, hast thou forgotten the risk my father ran for thee? And did not he, as the poor man, hazard as much as thou canst hazard?"

"Not quite, Mattvei Mattveitch, the poor man can only jeopardize his skin, but the rich man risks his skin and his money too. But still, my son, think not that I am ungrateful or unfriendly to one of the same village. As to your money

that I will take charge of; and as to giving harbour to your sick wife, truth to say, I am just married myself, and between you and I, as I could afford a pretty wife, I have chosen a helpmate as beautiful as a dove; but her temper is violent and jealous, when I keep her within doors, and there are so many gay young Lords who cast a longing eye upon her that I dare not let her go out. Now I am afraid that, besides her giving a sorry reception to your drooping bird, it would never prove a place of concealment for her. Nevertheless, Mattvei Mattveitch, if I procure an asylum for her, will it not do as well? So come along, come with me at once, and we will go to my brother Ivan's. He is a harsh, gloomy, and austere man, one of the "*starè verè*," (of the old faith) but, being under the same obligation to your father as myself, I know he will undertake it. And you know these men of the old faith; though they have never an image by which to swear, their words, when they promise, are as unchangeable as if they were of cast iron."

" Come along," said Mattheus; " but," he proceeded as they walked onwards, " you may judge how uncertain is my fate; I may ensure another day's freedom to-morrow by pretending that my examination was put off in the High

Police Office, and then, who knows? I may be transferred for life to the Lord's iron mines in Perm or Viatka. Now, Vasili Petrovitch, will you swear to me, by the beard of your father, by your hopes of salvation, and on the relics of your patron saint, that, when I am hopelessly disposed of, you will endeavour to contrive my wife's escape?"

"Why, mercy on us! no, Mattvei Mattveitch, I can promise nothing so unreasonable; money, judiciously given, will always deprecate the wrath of any Lord: Ivan Ivanovitch is rich now I grant you, but God bless you! he will soon want money as well as the rest of them. The gold and the thousand rouble notes were piled last night upon the gaming-table, as I heard from Dimitri, in a manner that made one's mouth water. As for contriving your wife's escape, I can understand that, when your wife is in your own possession, you should bolt and double bar her in; but, if you yourself are hopelessly removed, what does it signify what becomes of her? Oh, no! it is really unreasonable to suppose that one should risk utter ruin for the sake—not of a friend, but a friend's strange wife! for you know it would be utter ruin to a rich man to be concerned in effecting the escape even of his own son from the country. Oh no,

I will not defile my fingers with that pitch at any price. You must find some German trader who has connexions at Cronstadt, and if you tempt him with a sufficient sum, he will seek you out some mad English captain of a collier, who will carry her off out of pure bravado."

Mattheus made no reply. He had hoped to arrange this through some other channel, but, with a foreboding of the fate which awaited him, fearful of failing, he had been anxious of providing for her in several different quarters the means of flight.

They had now reached the Tolkoutshoy Rynok, a sort of permanent fair for every imaginable species of commodities. It was divided into distinct departments of rows of shops and wooden booths, and markets held in the open air. Here were alleys occupied exclusively by dealers in new or second-hand furniture, or china, or clothes, or fruit, or poultry, or fish, or broken up carriages, or old iron, or second-hand rubbish of every denomination.

Here also are the general receptacles for all stolen goods. The value of the perquisites of these dingy stalls to the police authorities within whose jurisdiction they fall may be imagined from the fact, that the *boutoushnik*, or common

police watchman, receiving some eighteen shillings of annual pay, gives a present of twenty thousand paper roubles (£900) every Easter to his chief.

It is true that the receivers of stolen goods are obliged to give two thirds of their profits to purchase the connivance of the various grades of these myrmidons of justice; and this, they have been heard to argue, shews the superiority of the system over that of other countries, where the receiver most frequently keeps the whole of the proceeds.

As for the *boutoushnik*, or soldier of police, who watches these transactions, to retain so coveted an employment, he really gives up to his chiefs three fourths of the amount of his extortions; and then, when he has hoarded up the remainder for a few years, one of his superiors will generally squeeze it out of him by an ingenuity of menace and torture, against which even the obstinacy to which he trusts is not proof.

At length, they paused in an alley dedicated to the sale of old rusty iron, and here, at his shop-door, they found Ivan Petrovitch. His costume was sordid, his long ragged beard was reddened by the rust of his wares, but there was a sedateness and gravity about his demeanour which inspired respect.

He greeted both his brother and Mattheus distantly and coldly even when informed who the latter was, and, signing to him to proceed, he heard the whole of his story and of his petition through. Then he replied bitterly, but without any additional warmth in his tone, "So, Mattvei Mattveitch, at length the hand of the Lord is heavy upon thee! Ay! no sooner was thy father, the stanch old believer, laid in his grave than thy mother abandoned the true faith, to take up with the general heresy, and the doctrines of idolatry, and the worship of Antichrist; and so God's curse has fallen upon thy mother's son. Nevertheless, thy father was a good and true man, and thus, my bowels yearning with compassion towards thee, I am led to incur the defilement which I should shun. Bring to me thy Midianite wife, I will give her harbour in her sickness, notwithstanding the pollution to my roof."

"Oh, Ivan Petrovitch, if the thanks of the son of your valued friend...." exclaimed Mattheus.

"Thank not me," said the old man, "for that which the Lord may perhaps yet call me to account for."

"But *I* will thank thee, brother, and embrace thee too," said Vasili.

"Not so!" said the stern sectarian, "my spirit

is vexed and troubled. Anger me not now. Call me not brother, apostate! but depart in peace."

" Well then, peace be with thee, good Ivan! I depart since thou offerest us not even a pipe to smoke."

" To smoke! thou hast surely forgotten—askest thou for a pipe to smoke from me, when it is written, that it is not that which goeth into the mouth, but that which cometh out which defileth?"

" Oh friend of my departed father!" said Mattheus, to whom the old man refused his hand, kissing the hem of his caftan, " if we should not meet again, I entrust to thee all that I have on earth most precious. Swear to me by the Bible, that thou wilt consider her a sacred charge?"

" What, swear?" said the old man sorrowfully. " Is then our communion with heretics and idolaters to be one séries of profanations and of blasphemies? If thou wert walking still in those paths of righteousness in which thy father moved so undeviatingly, thou wouldst know that it is written, Swear not at all. I have said it—go—the hour of prayer is come!"

" Good Ivan Petrovitch, perhaps we never meet again."

" I do not wish we should," said the sectarian, and, turning his back upon them both, he moved into his inner shop."

" Come!" said the brother, " let us go!" and then he added musingly, as if in some doubt of the result of his own apostacy, " But surely so many Emperors, and so many priests, and so many wise men, and so many rich men, could not have gone astray. Could they, my holy patron, St. Sergius?—Now, Mattvei Mattveitch, to-morrow I expect thee; to-day has been the day of fast and labour; to-day I am still the slave, but to-morrow is the *prasnik*, the holiday, and to-morrow we will make merry."

" Merry!" echoed Mattheus, as he pressed his hand, and proceeded on his solitary way.

CHAPTER VI.

"WELL!" said the Prince Isaakoff to Horace, "how did you come off last night?"

"Middling," replied Horace; "but you must have lost prodigiously."

"More than ever I lost in twenty sittings before. But when a bold player encounters cowards, he is like the skilful Andalusian matadores — a good thorough-bred fierce bull, which is game to the back-bone, they can conquer, because they know exactly how and where he will strike home—but your ill-bred craven *toro*, whose courage only comes out by fits and starts, who backs as often as he attacks, occasions all the accidents of the bull-ring. If I had held the bank another hour, you would have seen another story; but you broke up—you played unhandsomely."

"Not I!" said Lochadoff.

"Oh, no! you, and Durakoff, and Horace, were among the losers. When you were gone, I tried my fortune with Dimitri, and I had a run of luck which would have shewn a very different result."

"How fortunate that Jakof always is!"

"Yes; bearing out the adage of fools' fortune. Still Jakof will play sometimes."

"That is the only good point about him," said Durakoff.

"Well, considering his ample means, I am free to confess," replied the Prince, "that this qualification gives him more claims to my friendship than any other he could humanly possess. You see I bear people no ill-will for carrying off my money."

"So they will only give you the opportunity of winning it back," observed Horace.

"Precisely—with some of their own."

"Well, I was a greater loser than you," observed Durakoff.

"The devil you were!"

"Will you bet?"

"Any thing in creation. You are dreaming!"

"Well, then, I will bet you my reversion to a house worth thirty thousand roubles against my choice of one of your slaves."

"My dear Durakoff! have you been making a Champagne breakfast this morning?"

"Will you not bet?"

"Something reasonable—if you will lay such an unreasonable wager—"

"It is perfectly reasonable. I have nothing to risk just now, so I can only stake what I am going to have."

"Well, then, let it be a bet," said Isaakoff. "No one can say I am robbing you; for who the devil will remember such a claim till your uncle dies?"

"It is done then?"

Isaakoff nodded. "I suppose you have considered how tough the old gentleman is, and wish to know exactly what I have lost?"

"Oh, no! we can decide the wager without knowing its amount. Have you lost every thing?"

"No," said Isaakoff.

"*I have*," said Durakoff.

"Ay!" observed Isaakoff; "then it is a thorough case of destitution, for I remember you lost even your temper."

"Yes," continued Durakoff, "every tangible kopek; for yesterday I took my last furs, plate, and jewels to the Lombard—and every prospective kopek for the next three months."

"You would have met many of our last

night's friends there to-day," observed Lochadoff.

"Their to-morrow will be my to-day then," replied Durakoff; "but I submit that my wager is won."

"Not in the least; this is cavilling upon words," said the Prince.

"I appeal to those gentlemen!" said Durakoff.

"Well!" replied Horace, "it is one of those stupid wagers of which the terms were not properly defined, and which must therefore be drawn."

"I contend that it is won."

"Did you ever hear of a wager won by a *jeu de mot?*" said Isaakoff, a little contemptuously.

"Well, then, will you toss up for it?"

"What; for the choice of one of my slaves against a property which may come to me in the year 1900, if I win it?"

"Well, will you sell?" said Lochadoff; "for Durakoff is only blundering about it."

"Now you are nearer the mark," said the Prince. "My ready money is gone, and I am obliged to sell, so that, having once begun it, I would sell any thing, coin my grandfather, if he were a bar of gold, and weigh him out by the pound if he were a marketable commodity."

"In fact," said Lochadoff, "we want to buy one of your best slaves between us."

"I thought Durakoff had lost all his money."

"Yes, but we are in partnership. Lochadoff finds the money and I the wit."

"Am I right in supposing that Dimitri is your chief confidant now; for I do not see your French Legros?"

"Oh!" replied the Prince, "Legros is invaluable in his way, but I just happen to have sent him on a diplomatic mission."

"A mission?"

"Yes, to Paris; and as the story, to make a good one, wants publicity, and I can trust to your discretion in a piece of mischief, you must know that Jakof was in the Morskoi at *the* milliner's, and that *the Esmeralda* became enamoured—"

"Of Jakof?"

"Oh! nothing so miraculous; only of a dress he had purchased, it was the only one in St. Petersburg. The milliner's correspondent had written that the pattern was rare, and therefore no more were forwarded. Of course, the Lady, when it was not to be had, conceived an outrageous longing for it, and Jakof proposes to present it to her on her birth-day. Now there were two and twenty days till then, so within twenty minutes of the time that Jakof confided it to me, I despatched Legros to Paris. He is to go to the fountain head, to the manufacturer,

and to bring me back as fast as post-horses will carry him, a dozen similar, which I am going to present to a dozen of the dames who are to meet at the Esmeralda's, making each believe that hers is *the* celebrated dress."

"Oh! the scene will be admirable!" observed Durakoff.

"But I was about to observe," said Lochadoff, "that your Dimitri is a slave of mine. You wanted to buy him last time you came from abroad."

"Always providing that he did not know it."

"He suits you then?"

"As a hired servant. The rascal has picked up all the languages and vices of England, France, Germany and Italy, and ingrafted them upon the parent stock; but I grant you that he suits me well."

"How strange that, with so many serfs of your own, you should hire a Russian valet!" observed Horace.

"My dear fellow," replied Isaakoff, "experience teaches us that it is the only way to get well served. If Lochadoff wanted a valet, and I discharged him, he would not employ his own serf in that capacity, but hire a slave of some one else."

"Of course," said Lochadoff; "I hire a

Russian as it is. But now, Isaakoff, I am willing to pay any difference, but the serf of yours I wish to have is an old merchant, a certain Vasili Petrovitch, of whom I dare say you have never heard."

"Why, that is the man who brought me the sturgeon the last time we breakfasted together. Now what in Heaven's name do you want with old Vasili Petrovitch?"

"Well, then, the truth is this, the old sinner has married the little singer, Katinka; he shuts her up like a marmot in a Savoyard's box, and Durakoff and I are determined to get at her if we were to revolutionize the State for it."

"Hush! hush!" said Isaakoff, "that is an ugly jest."

"We have determined to club his money and my wit together for that purpose," said Durakoff; "we can toss up for her afterwards."

"There is only one objection, gentlemen," said Isaakoff.

"You will find us strongly indisposed to admit any," observed Lochadoff.

"Which is as follows," continued the Prince; "that some one has been beforehand with you. He is sold."

"Who was your customer? He must re-sell, we will give him a handsome profit."

"It is hardly probable that he will."

"Is he not mercenary?"

"Oh very."

"Oh then, I answer for success, if Lochadoff comes down liberally, which he must; only tell me to whom you have sold him."

"To himself," replied Isaakoff with a malicious smile.

"Now, what on earth could be more provoking?"

"I admit," continued Isaakoff, "that I was not aware that the old sinner had married such a pretty wife; but I am quite out of luck. I have another slave here in the house, whose spouse was the most beautiful woman in St. Petersburg; she is seized with some malignant fever."

"So the old Vasili Petrovitch, Katinka's husband, is a freeman!" observed the confederate couple with profound disappointment.

"But, never mind, I swear by his beard and by Jakof's spectacles," added Durakoff, "that I will get at Katinka notwithstanding."

"Ay," said Lochadoff, "if he had purchased the throne of the Grand Padisha a bargain, and shut her up in his seraglio—"

"I thought," said Horace, "that by the new law no serf could be sold without the estate to which he belonged."

"What signify laws," replied Isaakoff, "when

they may be evaded? I have got estates in Perm, where I should be happy to sell twenty acres for a penny, or for any piece of money that could be coined; well, if Vasili had been still mine to sell, I could easily have attached him to a few desctines of such barren uninhabited territory, and have sold them together to Lochadoff, and so the sale would be quite legal."

"Your serfs are well treated?" said Horace doubtingly.

"Too well, the rascals!" answered Durakoff, "I am going round now without a kopek in my pocket, to try and bully some of my uncle's serfs established in the city out of a few hundred roubles."

"You must press very hard," observed Lochadoff, "to squeeze much out after your uncle."

"Yes, I am afraid their teats are rather dry, I only wish they were good milch cows, like those Isaakoff's father left him."

"There will not be cream on the milk nor any superabundant milk in the udders long, will there, Isaakoff?" said Lochadoff prophetically.

"Not I suppose if I should happen to want it," replied Isaakoff; "but now, my dear Horace, I promised you that Dimitri should accompany your groom down to Peterhoff, since he is to

conduct my own horses thither. I have done with him and am going to start him now."

Let us shift the scene to the door of Bob Bridle's stable.

Lucifer is saddled and tied up by the halter; the light summer cloths are carefully packed on the saddle-bow, and he is all ready excepting his bridle.

Bob, with his coat off and his sleeves tucked up, is still rubbing down the horse's sleek, glossy, satin-looking skin, which here and there seems like a kid glove tightly drawn over lengths of packthread, so distinctly visible and prominent are the veins beneath it.

The water-brush, which Lucifer has some how got hold of, is lying at his feet bitten to pieces, and, as if to apologise for this misbehaviour, he rubs his head affectionately against Bob Bridle's shoulder.

"Now," said Bob, "there isn't a loose hair or grain of dust in your coat, and if any body says to the contrairy, I should like to see 'em pint it out; ah! it is of no use coaxing Lucy, you hadn't ought to have pulled that brush to pieces. It's of no use whinnying, not one bit of sugar, not the stump of a carrot, shall you have this blessed morning. Not if you was to go down on them knees of your'n, which by my leave howsomedever you should not do if you

was so inclined without your knee-caps on, to perwent your rubbing off the hair. Not if you was to go down upon them knees and kiss the book, and swear in plain English that you'd never do it again."

Here Lucifer whinnied and raised up one hoof as he had been taught to do.

"Well," said Bob relentingly, "worse sins has been forgiven in this here world, to say nothing of that there one as, nilly willy, we must all go to. You want to shake hands upon it, do you, and make it up? Well, it warn't andsome of you, but forgive and forget is my maxum, so give us your paw; no that is the left hand, never forget your manners, specially to them as sifts your oats and rubs you down: always give the right foot first and keep the other in your pocket till it's asked for."

The sagacious animal, finding that this one was not accepted, gave up his other foot.

"That is right," said Bob, taking hold of it, "here is your sugar, and a pretty hoof it is, we'd have a lavender-coloured kid glove or a black satin boot, like them Miss Blanche used to wear on her dear little feet, made for it before you could say Jack Robinson, only that it would be a pity to hide it."

But at this moment Bob perceived Dietrich and Dimitri beside him.

Bob had been of late cultivating an assiduous acquaintance with Dimitri, the only Russian he knew who spoke English, who could teach him a little Russ, and who could explain to him every thing he wished to know, and Dimitri, for some private reasons of his own, had been equally friendly.

"The steward says," observed Dimitri, "that your horse looks as if he could speak."

"He looks," said Bob with honest pride, "as if he would say more sensible things than a many Christians, if he did—"

"But *Boje moi*, what is the matter with your arm?" asked Dimitri.

"Oh!" said Bob, the inner part of whose arms appeared like the tatooed skin of a South Sea Islander, "that is a frolic when I was a boy: it's the pedigree of a famous horse, as the the other lads in the stable pricked in with vermilion and gunpowder, and all that is fancy-work round about it. It was just no use, unless there had been room for the whole stud-book."

Dimitri, with a little Tartar groom, was about to take down two of the Prince's horses, and Bob had been two hours awaiting him.

Just past the Barrier, Dimitri dismounted at the first *traktirchik's*, and called for Madeira and porter, and further on he stopped to smoke and drink again, to which, as Bob Bridle was not

tied to any particular hour, he made no particular objection; but he was not by any means so tractable, when the valet, inspired by the exhilarating liquids imbibed, seemed determined to gallop the horses along the hard Macadamised road.

At length, about midway, they stopped to bait and repose for a couple of hours, and here Dimitri insisted on treating Bob to champagne, which, considering the nature of his predilection for him, he could well afford to do.

For Dimitri's friendship arose from the fact of his settling all the bills. It was true that Bob looked with a hawk's eye to see exactly the number of roubles charged and the amount given out, and flattered himself that he was not cheated of a single kopek, which, it may be as well to inform the reader is a fictitious value, representing the hundredth part of ten pence halfpenny, into which, for the purpose of decimal computation, Russian money is divided.

But, like those individuals whom the wisdom of our adage-making ancestors has stigmatized as penny-wise and pound-foolish, Bob, though not cheated in the kopeks, was desperately so in the roubles; for Dimitri had at once perceived that Bob had not distinguished between the paper rouble and the silver rouble, which

is three times and a half its value—a mistake which Dimitri had artfully encouraged, and which enabled him to raise a commission of two hundred and fifty per cent on these little transactions.

At length, elevated with champagne, Dimitri insisted on proceeding and galloping on to their journey's end, and the matter terminated by Bob's obstinately remaining behind, to allow Lucifer his two hours' repose, and then walk him gently onwards. Now, after Dimitri's departure, Bob noticed a poor dusty soldier, sweating under the heat of his coarse brown great coat, stop and drink eagerly out of the horse-trough. Although *he was a soldier*, Bob's compassion for him was aroused.

"Won't you have something better?" said Bob, "that is enough to give you a bowel complaint," and, to render his words more intelligible, he took out his case-bottle, and poured a liberal supply into the cup, which the soldier tossed off with a profusion of thanks, though with a little suspicion lurking in his eye at this disinterested kindness.

Let us shift the scene to Strelna, to enable the reader to understand what is about to follow. Every one trembled. The Grand Duke Constantine *Pablovitch*, (the son of Paul,) the elder

brother of the Emperor Nicholas, in whose favour he had resigned the throne, had got up, as the nursery-maids express it, "with the wrong foot foremost."

Already those keen observers to whom his humour had become so terrible a study, had bruited abroad that his brow looked lowering; and the intelligence ran from mouth to mouth, as men speak of signs fearful and portentous.

That wrath, which in private life would have been ridiculed, power rendered momentously awful, and it was compared to the lightning, of which none knew how it was kindled, or on whom it would alight.

It is true that he was not in his Vice-royalty of Poland, and that consequently those exposed to his uncertain temper formed here but a portion of the troops, the inspection of which he had undertaken.

But amongst those unlucky wights whom it concerned, from the general aide-de-camp down to the private, this untoward predisposition occasioned an uneasiness which was distinctly visible on their countenances; for, under these circumstances, they all well knew how the Grand Duke would quarrel with the setting on of a soldier's chako, or the position of a button on his uniform, and doom him to the severest

punishment, and his officer to degradation, for it. There was no averting the ill effects of his anger by the minutest attention to their duties and appearance, for his wrath would wreak itself on some one; and they were therefore in the position of those village school-boys, who are hurried into school by the tyrannical master, who lies in wait to strike the last unfortunate. They were sure that some one must suffer, and therefore were only anxious personally to avoid his displeasure, which, from their very trepidation, they frequently incurred.

On the subject of the minutiæ and rigour of military costume, and discipline, and drill, the whole of the Romanoff family have long suffered under what the French, with all their love of the pomp and circumstance of war, have designated the "mania of corporalism." Alexander was about as deeply imbued with it as any specimen of the martinet to be met with in Western Europe; but in him it was scarcely perceptible in comparison with his father Paul, and his brothers Nicholas and Michael; whilst in Constantine it assumed the form of one of those insanities which call for the straight waistcoat.

The scene was the riding-school of his palace of Strelna. The Grand Duke Constantine—unlike his brothers and father, and indeed unlike

all Russians, excepting the Cossacks—a very bold horseman, was about to inspect the riding of some of the cadets and privates.

Now it happened that, a few weeks before, on turning a corner, he had come across an officer who was wearing his cocked hat with the point forward instead of broad-wise, according to the regulation; he degraded him from his lieutenancy, and made him a common soldier on the spot; but, his temper being ruffled by this incident, he searched the pockets of the next half-dozen cadets whom he met, in quest of kid gloves; and, making them open their coats, he at length pitched upon an unlucky youth, who had perpetrated the offence of venturing to wear a shirt many degrees finer than the regulations allowed. The Duke caused him to strip it off in the open street, and also doomed him to the ranks; but, as the two delinquents were smart and soldier-like in their appearance, bore an unblemished character, and were considered as good riders in their regiments, he determined to transfer them as privates to a model regiment at Warsaw, as both happened to be from the Polish frontier; and on this account they were amongst .e officers and cadets who were to display their norsemanship before him.

Let the reader imagine the riding-school

echoing to the stentorian roar of the Grand Duke's angry voice, and his dependents all trembling, because the unfavourable augury of his countenance that morning had been terribly verified, and he had not only been scattering his punishments with savage profusion, but there was little reason to believe the distribution of them over, the most difficult portion of their exhibition being yet before them.

Several of the riders were looking anxiously at the leaping-bar, and counting the number of holes at which it was placed, with trepidation, when the Grand Duke, to their utter discomfiture, caused it to be raised several pegs higher.

"Now," said the Grand Duke to one of his aides-de-camp, "I think that will do—go and try it."

"Monseigneur!" replied the colonel aide-de-camp, in an accent of involuntary supplication. "It is rather high!"

"What! dog, whose mother I have defiled!" roared Constantine — and the aide-de-camp dreading more the wrath of the Prince than the barrier, at once spurred his horse at it; but, in the first place, it was too high for his horse to rise to, and, in the next, he was too nervous to lift him, so that the animal turned short round. The Grand Duke jumped in an instant

on his charger, which a soldier held beside him, and, leaping backwards and forwards over the bar, he came up to the Colonel, and spat full in his face.

"There," he roared, "is it too high? Go to the barracks, hound—a month's arrest!"

"*I have erred,*" repeated the Colonel with humility; and, watching till the Grand Duke's head was turned, to wipe the spittle from his face, he sneaked off to the place of arrest.

Constantine now ordered another of the riders to take the barrier, who, although he was tossed about on the saddle, gained such desperate energy from the terrors of the Grand Duke behind him, that he forced his horse to clear it.

"Put up the bar a peg higher!"

And, on a signal made, another unfortunate officer advanced to attempt the leap; but his hand conveyed a tremulous motion to the rein—once, twice, thrice, his horse refused it.

"Dash up against it; spur him at it!" thundered the Grand Duke.

The terrified rider spurred his horse, and the animal stopped suddenly short, flinging him over its head.

"Oh, the fool!" said the Grand Duke; "a month's arrest. Now, get on again."

But he could not hold the bridle; his left arm was broken.

"Take him away, I am glad of it; I wish it was his neck! Put up the bar a peg higher. Now you, sir, get upon that horse and take him over." And thus half-a-dozen horsemen were forced successively to attempt the leap, till they were thrown, or their horses thrown down, or the men injured against the barrier.

At length it came to the turn of the two degraded men. The Duke had caused the bar to be so constantly raised that there seemed no chance of their horses being able to leap it. But if the barrier was before, the thunder of Constantine's voice was behind them. The ex-cadet first attempted, or feigned an attempt, of the futility of which he was beforehand persuaded, for his horse refused the leap. By this time the Grand Duke was furious. "Take him up to it with more life, hound; use the spur! Dash him to atoms against it!—break all his cursed bones and your own too, or I will have them broken for you!"

But the rider, smarting under his degradation to the ranks, had turned dogged, and persisted in bringing his charger at a safe pace up to the leap.

"Get off, devil's head! (*Chortova golova*)"

roared the Grand Duke. "Begone to the guard-house; I award you five hundred lashes! Now you," he continued to the ex-lieutenant: "and if you don't take it, I have defiled your mother!—I will have both man and horse pricked over with lances!"

Thus admonished, the degraded officer, who was a good rider and well mounted, lifted his horse so energetically that he carried him to the other side of the barrier, though not indeed without grazing it with his feet.

"He touched—he touched!" said the Grand Duke, "bring him back."

He leaped back.

"Now, again," said Constantine.

This time the horse fell headlong with his rider.

"Put him to it again!" roared the Grand Duke.

But all the desperate efforts of the ex-lieutenant, from whose nose and mouth the blood was streaming the while, seemed unable to determine the affrighted and perhaps injured animal to rise again. At length the rider let the bridle-reins drop in utter discouragement on the horse's neck.

"Let me crave ten minutes' rest, your Imperial Highness."

"Did my horse touch when I leaped it?" asked the Grand Duke.

"In the first place, the bar has since been raised many pegs, in the next your Highness is better mounted," said the Lithuanian, growing reckless.

"Oh! he reasons with me, he argues. Off your horse: to the barracks. Five hundred lashes with the other!"

* * * * *

Now Constantine had left this scene, still half stifled with rage, like a thunder-cloud overcharged with electricity and ready to spend itself upon the first object. He was galloping along the high-road at a furious pace, accompanied by two of his officers and half a dozen Cossacks, when he caught sight of the unfortunate soldier to whom Bob Bridle had given a draught from his case-bottle.

Now almost as far as the soldier could distinguish the uniforms of the riders, he recognised the terrible Grand Duke.

A private, as well as a cadet, is strictly forbidden to ride in any vehicle; and the soldier had ventured on this long walk to take home a pair of shoes he had been making, in the full confidence of being back in time for his duties, by getting a lift in some peasant's *talega* along

the road back to his quarters, and this—to say nothing of his heavy, dusty great-coat being unbuttoned, and his leathern stock loosened—of course he dared not avow to a superior to whom he might naturally appear to be at an unwarrantable distance from his barracks.

So just exclaiming "*Constantine Pablovitch!*" he jumped up, and bolted right through the traktirchik's into the garden, intending to make for the woods at the back; but here he found no issue, excepting through a wicket which led into the yard where Bob was tending Lucifer, who was tied up in the shade with a feed before him.

But here too there was no visible outlet unless to the high road, and the terrified soldier made an ineffectual effort to climb the high palisade which divided him from the fields.

"Ah," said Bob, as he slipped down, "so you have made a false start of it; but you look a poor, hunted, frightened devil, you do, so whoever is after you shall have a distance ahead and a fair run across country." And Bob very dexterously made a step of one arm by holding the paling, signing to the soldier to place his foot on it, and then he did the same thing with the other arm, and so alternately till

the wiry muscular little groom raised up the tall thin guardsman above his own head, which thus enabled him to gain the top and slip down on the other side.

"That is right," said Bob, "now, if there is any need to run at all, don't wait for your change."

Without understanding the pith of the advice given him, the Russian put it at once in practice, by scampering as fast as his legs would carry him.

At this moment the Grand Duke came up at a furious gallop, and reined in at the traktirchik's door.

His quick eye had recognised a soldier, as far as the soldier had recognized him, and his attention was immediately attracted, and his angry suspicions aroused, by the obvious solicitude of the soldier to avoid him.

"Where is that soldier who just stepped in here?"

The traktirchik, or tavern-keeper, who, attracted by the noise of the hoofs of horses, had come to his door, bowing almost to the ground, professed his ignorance of the fugitive's whereabouts, and called to all his waiters. But in vain they ran through the premises; in vain the Cossacks dismounted and searched, the soldier was no where to be found.

"Rogue! Scoundrel! Thief! thou hast favoured his escape," howled the Grand Duke.

The traktirchik throwing himself on the ground, before the Prince's horse, protested his innocence.

"Rascal and robber!" continued Constantine, endeavouring to force his horse over the tractirchik's prostrate body, whilst the animal, less cruel or more reasonable than his master, obstinately refused to trample the victim beneath his hoof.

Suddenly, however, the Grand Duke desisted from his attempt.

"Get up!" he said, "so thou keepest wines and spirits, and vodtka, and dainties to seduce the Emperor's officers and soldiers into expense as they pass by; thou harbourest them in their disobedience, and connivest at their extravagance? Bring me out here all the contents of thy cellar, wines, and spirits, and everything else."

And the Grand Duke, bounding to his feet from the back of his horse, drew his sabre so fiercely, that the tavern-keeper fell upon his knees.

"Get up, cursed hound! I have defiled thy mother! Bring hither the whole contents of thy cellar. You! don't sit stuck upon your horse like a statue," said Constantine to General

——, his aide-de-camp; "but draw, and come and help me."

The General dismounted obsequiously from his horse, and drew his sabre, uncertain what bloody work he was about to be called on to perform. The other officers of his suite, epauletted, and aguilletted, and plumed, and bedizened with orders as they were, hurried down to the cellars accompanied by some of the Cossacks, to assist the traktirchik and his waiters in bringing up their miscellaneous contents.

"Now," said the Grand Duke, as soon as there was a pile of bottles before him, "now, I will ruin you, you rascal! Now, I will teach you to connive at the disobedience of soldiers!" and he began fiercely slashing away with his sword at the bottles, the General, on a sign given, following his example with a ridiculous emulation.

"There, *I* will teach you!" roared Constantine.

"There, *we* will teach you!" chimed in the General, a note or two lower.

And beneath their joint efforts, the champagne, and the soda-water, and the bottled porter, bubbled out in a frothing stream, and mixed with the red current of costly clarets, and the amber flow of the most expensive Rhenish.

Every blow went to the soul of the traktirchik; he would rather have endured them all on his own person.

"There goes my expensive claret!" he thought, "there goes my Cliquot which stands me in seven roubles a bottle, and my Johannisberg at four salkovies (silver roubles)."

"Here's a game to be sure!" said Bob Bridle, who had come to the door of the yard. "You cut your lucky just in time, my friend in the buckram."

"Fresh bottles!" thundered the Grand Duke, whose sword, hacked like a hand-saw, was dripping with the blood of the grape.

"*Boje moi! Boje moi!* (Oh Lord! Oh Lord!)" exclaimed the traktirchik, as he hurried past Bob Bridle with as many bottles as his arms and the ends of his uplifted caftan could embrace or contain.

"Oh, you call him a Bogie! Well," observed Bob, "the painted one as Rooshian Billy, the coachman, carries under his petticoat, though he aint 'ansome, is better than that ere wiolent live one."

And now the Grand Duke and the General, after three quarters of an hour's hard work, came to a pause, and the latter wiped the perspiration

from his forehead. Like Alexander the Great when he wept for more worlds to conquer, Constantine was stopped short in his career —there were no more bottles to break.

It is true the Cossacks found here and there an open flask or bottle or two upon the shelves of the bar, and a few medicine phials, and then they brought down all the oil and vinegar cruets, which were remorselessly put to the sword.

"It's just what I remember doing once myself among the blacking-bottles with a poker," mused Bob, "when I was a little ragamuffin, before I was breeched."

"Bring out every thing that can be broken!" roared the Grand Duke, who was still like an angry lioness deprived of her whelps.

"Ay! there goes the crockery," observed Bob; "I thought it would come next."

When every thing destructible was broken, the Imperial Prince sheathed his sword.

"Now you will see, some of you, that this fellow's licence is taken away from him! There, that will teach you to connive at the disobedience of the Emperor's soldiers!"

The traktirchik bowed low, and humbly thanked him for his mercies.

Now Bob had quietly slipped on Lucifer's bridle. The loud sonorous neighing of the

noble stallion and the critically quiet attitude of Bob Bridle had two or three times attracted the Grand Duke's attention, but it had always been diverted by the fresh supply of bottles or of crockery, given to his ruthless sabre, though it could no longer be said to his sabre's edge.

Now it was an unusual and an alarming sight for the Duke's suite to see any one stand as unmoved and as perfectly self-possessed, as the manner of Bob Bridle showed him to be, when the tempest of wrath which they so much dreaded was raging—it was alarming, because they considered it a spectacle calculated to increase its violence. So that one of his staff, who spoke English, and instantly recognized Bob Bridle as an Englishman, gradually edged up to him, and asked in a voice intended to impart somewhat of the awe which filled his own breast:

"Do you know who that is?"

Bob shook his head.

"That is his Imperial Highness, the Grand Duke Constantine!"

"Well!" replied Bob, "I don't think much of he. Does he belong to a Temperance Society, or has he got any friends in the rag and bottle line as he wants to make a job for?"

"His Imperial Highness, the Grand Duke!" repeated the officer, thinking that Bob had not heard.

"The Grand Duke!" thought Bob to himself; "now what do they mean by a 'grand duke?' He is as smart as a parish beadle, and makes as much noise as a town-crier, but I can't see how he is to interfere with me."

"Good Heavens! get out of the way you idiot!"

"Well!" replied Bob, "it aint very sensible to look on at such tom-foolery," and, stepping lightly into the saddle, he was proceeding onwards.

"Madman!" whispered the officer.

"Who is that fellow! how does he dare to pass me so upon the road? Stop!" said the Grand Duke.

"So I will when I get to my journey's end," said Bob to himself.

"Stop! stop! stop!" echoed half-a-dozen voices.

"Bring him back!" thundered Constantine to the Cossacks, who, calling to him to stop, spurred after him.

"Ay! if you gentlemen with the long poles catch me, you may serve me like that ere ginger pop and bottled stout."

"Spur after him! stop him! spear him

through!" vociferated the Grand Duke, as he saw Lucifer break away from his pursuers like a greyhound from a set of heavy mastiffs, and his rider turning his head to look contemptuously back, as he said in answer to their wild hurrah:

"One would think it was Bedlam broke loose, with these fellows without rims to their hats!"

The light weight the grey was carrying, and the length of his stride as he bounded lightly on, would evidently soon have enabled him, as Bob expressed it, "to get away from them like a bird, without turning a hair," so easily he seemed, without an effort, to shoot ahead, when suddenly a detached body of horse-artillery changing its quarters appeared upon the road before him, and Bob was obliged to pull up. But he had no thoughts of surrendering to the Philistines. He was only deliberating whether he should ride suddenly straight through the Cossacks, for Bob's contempt for the firmness of a military seat unjustly enough extended even to them; but in another instant he made up his mind, and, spurring off the high road, he took across a field right up to a wooden paling. The ragged pieces of split pine wood stuck into the earth diagonally, which compose the fences in Russia, form a

formidable *chevaux-de-frise;* a horse stumbling must inevitably be staked; but Bob, who knew the vigour of his mighty stallion, and how, from never having been hunted, he was in the habit of rising much higher than was necessary to his fences, unlike a seasoned old hunter who measures the height so accurately by the eye, and puts forth no unnecessary strength to waste it—Bob Bridle rode Lucifer at the paling, and Lucifer cleared it like a flying Pegasus.

An exclamation of admiration burst from the Cossacks as they came up one by one, and found how impracticable was the leap for their own horses; but the wild blood of the sons of the Steppe was up, and they galloped round it shouting and shaking their pennonless spears.

"Give me a lance!" said the Grand Duke, who, furious at seeing his people baffled by the fugitive, had just galloped up.

He was better mounted than any of his accompaniment, being a Prince, and able to afford any kind of horse, and a bold rider, not afraid to back a good one.

He put his horse at the fence, and, though the animal could not leap it with his heavy weight, the rotten wood gave way, and thus he forced a passage, and, with an oath which

merged into a savage yell, and with a lowering brow, he rode away far ahead of all his Cossacks.

Now Bob had reached the crest of one of those undulations of ground called mountains in Russia, and in England hillocks. He looked round in triumphant security, and Lucifer, as he shook his mane to the wind, neighed a blast of defiance. Neither were yet aware that the ground, covered with green grass and low bushes before them was so treacherous, till the Grand Duke being within distance, they attempted to proceed, and went floundering into moss-pit after moss-pit, and quagmire after quagmire, till their pursuer was close upon them.

"Now Lucifer, now then," soliloquised Bob, "who ho! hold up—don't let us be beaten by a soldier. Oh for five minutes of the two-mile course of Newmarket! This is only fit for a frog or a tadpole, not for a well-bred English horse with a Christian rider on his back;" and at this moment the grey floundered up to his shoulders. Bob heard a horse blowing behind him; he turned his head—there was the Grand Duke five paces off, riding at him so fiercely with his lance that it was only with the utmost dexterity that Bob, by moving sideways on his saddle, avoided the thrust which, as it was, grazed

his jacket, though with great presence of mind he caught and held fast the shaft.

"D—n your broomstick, don't poke it at me," said Bob, forgetful of his bible, and lifting his horse out of the slough, whilst, he still grasping one end of the spear, and the Grand Duke holding the other, it became obvious that one of the two must become unseated. But Bob held to his saddle like an iron vice, and when the Grand Duke found that his balance was nearly lost he let go and drew his sabre. "Ah!" said the groom, "if I only knew which was the right end of it I'd poke you back again," and then he threw the lance contemptuously down. But the nature of the ground did not permit him to get a fair start; again Lucifer was swamped in a moss-pit, and the infuriated Constantine, who through good luck, or skill, or knowledge of the surface of the country, had been more successful in keeping his horse's footing, at length got at him, and began raining the blows of his sabre about Lucifer's quarters, and Bob Bridle's head and shoulders. Happily the sword had been thoroughly blunted by its previous usage.

Nevertheless, by one tremendous plunge, the horse gained a smooth piece of level turf; but after a short space there was again a palpable

marsh before them. Bob turned to see how far the Duke was behind, and as he turned he saw a gash on Lucifer's quarters from which the blood was streaming. Bob's patience was gone; the bog was before him, the cause of his indignation close on his horse's heels. He turned round, and to the Grand Duke's surprise spurred right upon him. Constantine was very skilful in equestrian combat, but he was accustomed to encounter riders upon managed horses; Lucifer came upon him like a thunder-bolt, with a stride of sixteen or eighteen feet at a bound, and the velocity of a missile. The steady unflinching hand, the quick energetic heel, of the Englishman enabled him to guide the very last of these projections of his horse's weight, multiplied as its power was by its speed, so as to catch the Grand Duke's charger sideways, and down came man and horse before the charge of Bob and Lucifer, as if shattered by a cannon-ball. Luckily it was on the spongy moss turf, which was like a spring mattress.

"Now," said Bob, "what have you got to say for yourself that I don't trample the life out of you?"

The Grand Duke was stunned for a moment; his face had been buried in the mud, and he had not sufficiently recovered his breath to answer.

"Highness! they call you," continued the

exasperated Bob, "your ways is the lowest that ever I hear of, to go and injure a poor dumb animal with that ere pruning hook of yourn. What had we done to you, that you should ride after me and stir me up with a long pole, as if I was a bear in the theological gardens? What business had you to slash me about the head? Did you take my head for a piece of crockery, or my neck for the neck of one of them ere bottles? I've a mind to try your'n, I have!"

But in the midst of Bob's triumph, the Cossacks had taken advantage of the swampy ground; they were surrounding the marsh, and six or eight were close upon him with upraised lances.

"No, no, no, no!" shouted the Grand Duke, with a terrible oath raising himself upon one hand. "Not a hair of his head shall be hurt!"

The Cossacks seized Lucifer's bridle.

"What a man!" continued Constantine, rising up, "though there is so little of him."

The sunshine which succeeds an April shower offers not a contrast more remarkable than the good-humoured, hearty admiration of Constantine's countenance with its previous savage and malignant expression.

"There is a horse and rider for you! why you all—I have defiled your mothers—I can

beat you at anything; and this little devil, armed only by a pair of gloves, has baffled me, with lance and sabre. Who is he? What is he?"

"An English groom," said the aide-de-camp, who had first spoken to Bob.

"A groom! if he will take service, I will give him a squadron before a twelvemonth is out; if he were only three or four times as big I would make a Colonel of him."

The aide-de-camp interpreted for Constantine, whose English was not very fluent.

"His Imperial Highness, in admiration of your skill, affords you his full pardon."

"For what," said Bob, "for running his spear through my jacket, or for cutting me about the head with his hanger, or for maiming that ere pretty bit of horse-flesh?"

"His Highness will make you every reparation; he judges you worthy to carry a sword instead of a currycomb."

"I wish I had the currying of his'n, I'd have kept it out of a sight of mischief to day."

"His Royal Highness offers you to quit your menial situation; he will make a soldier and a gentleman of you."

"What! make *me* a soldier!"—said Bob, "why that would be adding insult to injury."

"What can I do for him?" said the Grand Duke at length.

"Do for me?" said Bob, to whom it had been at length explained, that this was the Emperor's brother. "Do for me? Why be so good as let me go quietly along the King's highway, when we next meets, without saying nothing to nobody;" and here he pulled his forelock with a sort of constrained civility.

CHAPTER VII.

Mattheus, under the pretext of having again to attend at the Police office on the following day, left his wife, who had not recovered her senses, to seek out again Vasili Petrovitch, and make with him the final arrangements, which the next day it might be too late for him to effect.

According to appointment, he went not to any of the trader's multifarious places of business, but to his snug wooden house in the suburbs, for it was not only a *prasnik* or holiday, but moreover a day of rejoicing and merrimaking as the first of his freedom.

The place of residence of Vasili Petrovitch was situated in one of those unpaved streets, which the snow in winter and the mud in summer would render almost impassable, were it not for a sort of wooden platform or pavement

raised about three feet above the soil, on which the pedestrian, who chooses to exchange the disagreeables of the common road for the chances of falling through the rotten boards, may generally contrive to walk dry-footed.

As soon as the door was opened, the steam of many dishes mingled their strongly savoury odours with the air, although, this being one of the last hot days of the season, few of the windows were closed.

He was at once shewn into a low-roofed parlour, adorned with heavy pieces of furniture of a very dark mahogany relieved by very bright brass handles, the room being further ornamented by a couple of richly framed pictures, each representing a coarse landscape, and in each of which a real clock was inserted in the twin church steeples; and of course there was the gaudily framed image of the saint in the corner, before which burned the purest of oil, in a silver lamp.

Indeed, to the assiduity with which he had cultivated the good graces of this celestial personage, the host in his own mind chiefly attributed his prosperity.

Vasili Petrovitch himself was seated at a table, no longer in his sordid caftan, or resembling the thrifty trader, who sipped the oil out

of the same dish, or munched the coarse black bread, with his servants* and apprentices; but now revelling in all the most costly luxuries which his imagination could suggest.

At first sight, he seemed to have on his head a green turban, and his new dark blue robe was covered by a napkin, which was placed like a shawl round his neck; but, on closer inspection it proved to be an enormous water-melon, into which a hole the size of his head had been scooped, and which, to enjoy the genial coolness it imparted, he had donned like a bonnet, whilst its juice streamed down his face and trickled gratefully from his beard, like the ointment poured upon the head of an old Judean patriarch.

Another water-melon was cut and lay upon a plate before him, whilst several of the same fruit, which are all brought from a distance of at least five or six hundred miles from St. Petersburg, were beside him, and he had in his mouth the troubke, and in his hand a tumbler full of cold tea.

Mattheus was greeted with a hearty welcome, and, having unluckily admitted that he was hot, it was with considerable difficulty that he could decline his host's pressing solicitations, as he endeavoured to persuade him to assume a water-

melon head-dress like his own; and, even when he had positively refused, one of his pricaschiks or clerks, who officiated as head butler and waiter, received a signal to scoop out a hole in one of the finest fruits, for the size of which orifice he measured the head of the guest by the eye, after the fashion of a hatter's prentice.

This was in the genuine spirit of the old Muscovite hospitality, to make the stranger feel that no empty compliment had dictated the offer.

Although Mattheus was naturally anxious to enter at once on the deeply interesting business which he had in hand, Vasili Petrovitch, perhaps with somewhat of sympathy for the obvious distress of mind, which his coarse nature judged that a taste of his festivity would relieve, resolutely determined that his guest should first drink to his health and prosperity on this auspicious occasion, and give him his opinion of his wife, his horse, his cat, and his nightingale.

The cat indeed was a magnificent animal of the Angora breed, which on a signal jumped on the table and purred, as it rubbed its head against its master.

"Is he not a fat one, brother?" said the owner admiringly.

And in fact the rotundity arising from little exercise and good living, and the length and thickness of its coat, gave it an aspect quite aldermanic.

"I have refused two hundred roubles for it."

Mattheus, who felt too great a depression of spirits to contest the point, and on the other hand was aware that the readiest way to obtain his end was to humour his host, allowed himself first to be led to see the nightingale, considered the second in the city and for which six hundred roubles (£25) had been paid, and then to the stable, from which an Orloff trotter enormously fat, according to the taste of the genuine Russian merchant, was led out.

It was not without pride, that his owner boasted that he had cost him twelve thousand roubles.

"And now, best of all, you shall see my wife, she is not very fat yet; but I can see by her make that in a dozen years she will be as round and as plump as a ball, for her bones are small and her flesh has inclination to dimple already. She is a Niemetz, a foreigner, as well as your wife, Mattvei Mattveitch," continued he, unheeding the painful expression that crossed his guest's countenance. "At least her mother was, not that I find but what these foreigners have quite as much tongue as our Russian women."

Here Vasili chuckled at his own wit, to render which intelligible to the reader, it must be observed that the lower order of Russians give the name of Niemetz, which signifies "dummies," to all foreigners whose idiom is utterly foreign to their own, and therefore to all who do not belong to the Sclavonic family, though this appellation is now beginning to be confined to the Germans.

"I rejoice, brother," said Mattheus, "that the Lord has prospered you so well."

"Yes, thanks be to the Lord for it! But let us have in something to eat and drink, and let Katinka come in: now my friend you will see a real pigeon! a soul! a little soul! I picked her up at the wife-market in the Summer Gardens. I had said to myself, Vasili Petrovitch thou art getting stricken in years, thou art rich, take to thyself a wife, and when I saw her pass amongst the shew of women, says I, that woman shall be mine, and do you know I nearly lost her, for thought I, though I can afford her—for why should not an old man gratify his whim? —and though I will have her at any price, still I will get her as cheap as possible; so I said to the old woman, the broker, pointing to her, I might be induced to take that girl; find out for me all about her.

"Says she, when she had made inquiry,

'Vasili Petrovitch, if you want to wive, I have a fine shew of marriageable women on my list; but that woman will never suit you; she is not the quiet daughter of a trader, she is half a Niemetz, she is a free woman, and she has been trained as a chorus-singer.' "

"And you married so out of the habits of your people?"

"Ay that did I; I am not an ascetic of the old faith like my brother, and, since I left it for the new, because the new was the more comfortable creed, dy'e think I will not take elbow-room in it? What cares my holy patron, St. Sergius, so that his lamp be kept clean and the oil be pure and never-failing? Well, I nearly lost her because the baggage had got many suitors; ay, there were noblemen hunting on the same scent, and the old hag who acted as broker was betraying me for the promise of an embroidered katzaveika above the commission that I offered her, and then the old devil told me, that she had done it for my soul's good. But nevertheless I secured Katinka, she could not resist the furs and the jewels, and the money, of old Vasili Petrovitch; and I was made happy and shall be happier still when she grows fatter."

"You are a lucky fellow," said Mattheus, endeavouring to force a smile.

"No," said the old man with a chuckle, "not lucky but wise. According to the wisdom of my fathers, I lived frugally, and kept my light under a bushel. So I was enabled to acquire wealth and to keep it, and to choose the prettiest wife in the city, and to heap upon her jewels and furs to her heart's content, and dost thou think that I have paraded her about, or mean to do so now that I am a freeman, no, no! The young noblemen and the officers, with their plumed hats and spurred heels, who were on the scent, have all lost it, and I will keep her away from them, I warrant me."

At this moment his people had finished spreading the table with a collation, which was to be replenished during the whole day for the benefit of such visitors as should drop in to congratulate the host.

The board groaned beneath the promiscuous profusion of smoked salmon and pickled lampreys, the costly sterlet and smoked goose, Hambro' beef and dried reindeer tongues, sausages and water-melons, foreign cheeses and sardines, anchovies and peaches, dried caviar and pine-apples, salt herrings and Batvinia, (cold fish-soup, seasoned with floating lumps of ice,) potted meats and preserved ginger, limes and pickled cucumbers, olives and large black

radishes, and many other eatables too tedious to record; but all mixed up higgledy-piggledy in glorious confusion with flasks of kirsch, noyau, curaçao, and kümmel; and bottles of English sauces, soy, ketchup, anchovy, shrimp and Harvey; for, without understanding their respective and peculiar merits, it suffices for this class of Russians that these condiments are dear, foreign, and neatly corked up in strange-looking bottles.

There is this to be said, that, if a trader from the interior, unaccustomed to the oil and Italian business, as sometimes does occur, happens to pour out either soy or shrimp sauce as a liqueur, to settle the fatness of his meal, he with impunity, after sipping at it, swallows the glassful and then refills with noyau, gravely observing that he prefers the latter as a beverage.

And then besides, there were bottles of Johannisberg, and Malaga, and Tokay, and Port, and Sherry, and the simultaneous popping of the corks of several bottles of Champagne and London porter shewed the wasteful profusion of the owner's hospitality.

A barrel of the large coarse oysters imported into St. Petersburg was opened, and occupied a position in the feast, the more respectable since they were then at sixteen shillings per dozen,

Some, indeed, opened their shells like a wide gaping mouth, as if to show that they contained only the cold remains of the departed—not always even of the recently departed: yet these Vasili seemed to pick out with relish. And then, as if in dread that this would not be sufficient to take off the edge of their appetites, hot *blinis*, or pancakes, both of buckwheat and ground rice, were served at intervals, with an imitation of the Italian *ravioli:* and lastly the blooming, blushing Katinka herself, in a sky-blue satin katzaveika, made her appearance, presiding over a huge salmon-pie, which the ambition of the cook had made beyond the compass of any mortal dish, and which was carved upon a board covered by a napkin.

Katinka, or Catherine, herself, was decidedly a beauty, having derived her attractions from her German mother. But, though a natural and arch coquette, there was a cold, calculating, passionless sensuality about the expression of the lower part of her face, which almost explained her past and present history—both the very questionable antecedents of one, who looked on men chiefly as purveyors of jewellery and Cashmere shawls, and her sudden retirement from her numerous admirers to become the wife of the greasy old serf. She had indeed

without difficulty adopted the costume of a trader's wife, because, in the first place, she considered that it became her, and in the next, that Vasili was easily led in this form to lavish his wealth in a magnificence congenial to his taste.

It has been said that Katinka made her appearance blushing and blooming, but both the bloom and the blush were of a lasting kind, because artificially imparted to a very clear and transparent skin. Though it was so warm, she could not help displaying a cloak of pale amber-tinted satin, lined with the richest sable, and with a collar of the fur of the black fox. Her pale blue satin katzaveika, too—for the Russian women, particularly the wives and daughters of traders, revel in the most delicate and perishable shades of this material—was donned over a dark and richly brocaded petticoat of silk, and her feet were encased in shoes of white satin. She wore upon her person, besides, in the form of ear-rings, necklaces and brooches, a great quantity of brilliants in very old-fashioned settings; and, as if the fur cloak would not have been sufficient to guard her against any very improbable and sudden change of temperature, she had also on her arm a very costly Cashmere. Altogether, his wife's dress as she

gracefully cut a slice from the salmon-pie, and as Vasili's eyes surveyed both her and her ornaments, with the conscious satisfaction of being the lord of all they rested upon, must have cost the old man near two thousand pounds sterling.

Katinka seemed disposed to lavish her fascinations on Mattheus as soon as she saw, to her evident surprise, in her husband's guest a shaven and fashionably attired young man, instead of one of his bearded and caftaned brethren; but, finding her glances thrown away upon his mournful impassibility, she transferred them to her husband, in the hopes of coaxing him into allowing her to exhibit somewhat of her finery that evening in the Summer-Gardens; but in vain, for Vasili Petrovitch was in some things a sullen old Turk; there were points on which he could no more be coaxed into compliance than a piece of granite molten by the sunbeams—and, as for trying foul means, it was equally dangerous, because he was constantly reminding his gossips, when they assailed him with their domestic complaints, of their marital rights, and advising them to send their wives to be flogged at the police-office—which it is still the privilege of every Russian husband to do, even without assigning any reason, since

the law no longer recognizes his right to do justice to himself.

In fact, Katinka had not been aware of the utter bondage to which she was selling herself; but, being a woman of a reflective turn of mind, she bore her lot with contentment, and even with cheerful resignation, whenever she passed a church-yard and thought of Vasili's age.

At length, when Mattheus thought he had fulfilled the requisite courtesies, pleading his want of time, he insisted on an immediate interview in private with the host. With a last effort to press him to more food and drink, as they rose together, Vasili gave the order to open three more bottles of Champagne and three score of oysters, to show his guest that, if he did not eat and drink, both would be wasted.

Such was the hospitality of Vasili Petrovitch, a true type of his class, who did not possess two shirts in the world, nor boast a pair of stockings — such his boundless extravagance when he did make an occasional departure from his habitual frugality, and intending, as he did, to resume on the morrow his old caftan and his seat at the wooden bowl with his dependents—where he spent about eighteen-

pence per week for his living, and held, from motives of economy, a piece of sugar as large as a pea between his teeth whilst he poured two or three tumblers of unsweetened tea down his throat.

"Now, Vasili Petrovitch," said Mattheus, "two hours hence I must be with the grand-master of the secret police, and after that—God knows! I have read Ivan Ivanovitch's eye as he passed me this morning, and there is little hope for me except in Heaven! Look! I have brought to confide it to you all my wife's fortune. Here, in the presence of your patron saint, I trust it to you as a sacred deposit!"

"These are foreign notes," said Vasili, eyeing them curiously. "I do not know their value, but as you give them into my hands, so you shall receive them back."

"No; it is not exactly thus I mean it. They are worth about fifty thousand silver roubles; now change one or all with some of the foreign merchants, according as my wife's necessities may require, or as she may desire it; and remember that, at any time she asks it, I wish you to give any portion or the whole into her hands, as you would into

mine. And as you are faithful to this trust, so may God prosper you, Vasili Petrovitch!"

"Amen!" said Vasili Petrovitch, fervently; "but have you considered how mad it is to trust money in the hands of women? Better let me return it only into your own."

"I may be sent back to the village—perhaps to the mines on the Lord's estates in Perm, and we may never meet on this side the grave!"

"Brother! brother! verily thy wisdom hath departed with thy beard! Does a Lord treat his slave thus, when the slave has got fifty thousand roubles well hidden and secured, and the slave manages wisely?"

"Ah, if you knew how his anger was aroused!"

"Anger passes, and the love of gold endures!" replied the old man.

"And furthermore," said Mattheus, "that money is not mine; it is hers, and to her restore it. Not one kopek of her fortune should now go to save my very life, since I have already robbed her of health, and happiness, and peace of mind, and linked her noble name to the name of a slave—for what am I but a poor degraded trampled slave!"

"Ay, if you had let your beard grow and

stuck to the habits of your fathers," said Vasili, "perhaps by this time like me..... "

"At least, if I had lived unconsciously in my ignorance, and my filth, and superstition," added Mattheus, with excitement, "I should not feel my soul weighed down in my misery by the ruin of an angel—for what better idea have you of such a woman than of the Almighty's angels!"

"She is very well!" said the old man; "but she will never get as fat as Katinka."

Mattheus remained for a moment thoughtful. Although with no other witnesses, in Vasili's imagination, than the image of the patron saint whom they invoked, he trusted to him his wife's fortune with little hesitation; for, although Vasili was in his usual dealings, like most of his class, a notorious rogue, these people, Mattheus knew to be true and faithful to each other. Vasili himself had formerly belonged to an *atel* or company of his fellows, which rendered itself responsible for the honesty of each of its members, and thus each member recommended by it, and who could not otherwise be trusted with an article of the most trifling value, is commonly employed, especially by the foreign bankers and merchants, as a money-carrier, and is never known to be guilty

of a violation of trust, for which his brother atelchiks would suffer.

On the whole, there is perhaps no such general honesty and good faith ever to be met with amongst men who are bound by equal moral obligations towards the whole world as in those classes, whose opinions or tenets allow them, with the one exception of their own race, tribe, or caste, to look upon the whole human family in a spirit of hostility, which at least excuses any treachery. The Jews, in those parts of the continent where oppression has divided them from the Gentiles, the gipsies, and the Russian Moujiks, afford a few out of many exemplifications of this singular strengthening of social good faith by the restriction and limitation of its sphere.

A large portion of the internal commerce of the empire and nearly all its export trade are carried on upon a system based on this rough probity, which, under certain circumstances, is almost always to be met with from men, who, in their ordinary dealings with their fellow subjects, and invariably with strangers and those appertaining to strange classes, exhibit a dishonesty which seems sometimes morbidly irresistible.

The merchants of London, by advancing

capital, in fact, set the export trade in motion. From their commission houses in St. Petersburg, Riga and Odessa, through innumerable agencies, advances of money are made to irresponsible men, who can neither read nor write, in remote parts of the empire, and who are true to their engagements, delivering their goods for eventual transport to that England, of which they have scarcely ever heard, with sufficient punctuality for the purposes of trade.

Mattheus therefore felt little anxiety as to the safety of his deposit, but he was more doubtful as to whether the brother of Vasili Petrovitch would still consent to take charge of Blanche till her convalescence, if she were destined to recover, for her medical attendant had just decided that it was a malignant fever; and it was probable that the Prince would that day order her removal from his palace to the hospital, by which opportunity, melancholy as it was, her husband hoped to profit to instal her in a place of refuge.

"Did not Ivan Petrovitch say he would receive her?"

"He said so," replied Mattheus.

"Then, if Ivan Petrovitch said so—if death itself came to his threshold, he would still say,

come in! But you have been near her and she has a malignant fever," said the old man, crossing himself; "bring me some scents, and burn vinegar, and let the Pope be sent for to sprinkle the rooms with holy water."

"Well," said Mattheus, "I leave you! What, not my hand? Well, God bless you! and as you are true to your trust, may He spurn or receive you when you appear before His judgment seat!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Count Horace had just done writing. A number of those fur-lined garments, which the Russians call shubes, were lying about the room, from which he designed to make choice for the approaching winter. A servant announced that his English groom was there.

"Good morning to you, Sir."

"Good morning, Bob."

"Well, how is Lucifer?"

"All right and tight, Sir."

"Sit down, Bob," said the Count good-humouredly, for he looked forward to considerable entertainment from all these interviews.

"No, thankee Sir," said Bob, looking round him, a little uneasily, his eyes during their circuit resting mechanically on the fur pelisses piled upon the sofa.

"Now, how would one of those fur shubes serve you for the cold weather?"

"It wouldn't serve me no how, Sir, no more than I wouldn't serve a Rooshian gentleman," replied Bob, with rising acrimony, for he was very sensitive on the subject of any projected innovation of costume, and looked with a suspicious eye on all that might be held to indicate it.

"Well," said the Count, "don't be afraid; no one will force you to wear one, but I cannot exactly see why you should shew such marked disinclination to serve a Russian master. Whatever may be the peculiar qualities of the Russians, they are generous enough and affable enough to their servants."

"I know it," answered Bob, "and that is just it; they not only talks friendly and familiar like to their French cooks and walleys, but even makes hail fellow-well-met with their English grooms and coachmen, shakes hands with 'em and asks 'em to sit down, when they so far forgets their selves as to submit to it. Now it don't make a groom a bit more 'spectable for sitting hob and nob with his master, but it does to be serving a master as every body respects, which that ain't the way to get 'em to do, and it is agrawating to a man as don't wish to step out

of his place, but takes credit in serving a gentleman as keeps in his'n."

"Oh," thought Horace, "I see the rebuke. You are rather a philosopher, Bob."

"Well, Sir," said Bob, "that pint ain't clearly agreed upon, for my late master, Mr. Mortimer, often said, I was *no* philosopher."

"Do you know the meaning of *philosopher*?"

"*His* meaning, and he was the knowingest gentleman as ever I come across, was a man as could make foreign cutlery bright and sharp, as could polish boots and shoes with French blacking, and as would undertake to keep a lumbering German carriage in order, which never was in order, from the day it was made."

"Well, that is a very singular definition; but, on the whole, Bob, never you take being called a philosopher amiss, because it is the most creditable appellation imaginable."

"As Mr. Mortimer understood it," replied Bob, "a philosopher *was* entitled to some credit, since he must have succeeded in doing what no man ever did before him, which no man ever made foreign knives clean, blacking shine, or wehicles roll smooth or look tidy, and no man never will."

"You must look at it in a more enlarged point of view, Bob, the word "philosophy" is

derived, you see, from two old Greek words, which mean the love of *wisdom*, or, according to the Cartesian definition, the love of the thing demonstrated."

"I have been told *that* too," said Bob, "but what is the use of arguing with a gentleman of your 'cuteness on the truth of any words as ever came out of the mouth of any *Greeks*, thimble-riggers, horse-chaunters or Yorkshire dealers, old or young. Otherways I could shew that philosophy was exactly the precise reverse, and contrairy to the love of wisdom, or at least to the practice of it."

"Let us hear," said the Count, "by all means."

"Well, sir, just to go to the case in pint; since Mr. Mortimer found out, when he tried it, that French knives wouldn't cut, that foreign blacking wouldn't shine, nor German coaches roll easy when they moved, nor look respectable when they stood still, I think that what he called philosophy (which was thinking that they would) wasn't exactly wisdom."

Bob proceeded, being encouraged to do so by an approbatory sign from Horace.

"Now, Sir, I once too, knowed a man as called himself a regular philosopher, and lived in a back attic overlooking a mews. He was in

the habit of watering his porter, and always poured it out *from the pewter* into a chinay mug without a handle, *that* wasn't wisdom. Then, Sir, there was a schoolmaster, as lived near Newmarket, who, when he buried his scolding wife, came and run up a score at the tap of the Rutland Arms, sung jolly songs and courted another wife directly. Now that wasn't wisdom, especially as, if the first wife used her tongue free-like, the other used the poker quite as freely.

"Then, Sir, there was the parson, as made a Christian of me, when I was only rising six weeks old; he drove his wife from the parsonage to the church with the same horse and gig for eleven years; at length the wenerable gentleman goes to London, and at the Addled-egg Gallery he sees a new patent chain safety rein, partikelarly recommended to invalids and elderly timid and nervous people, which tickled his reverend fancy so much, that he bought it.

"'Bob,' says he, 'don't you consider this a valuable acquisition, which pervents the possibility of a horse running away.'

"'Sir,' says I, 'seeing that your'n is broken-winded and lame on three legs, I wouldn't try to perwent it.'

" 'Never mind,' says he, 'it is sound philosophy to guard against the possibility of an accident.' So, Sir, he did try it, and pulled the horse and gig, and his wife and all, over into the ditch on the following Sunday. Now he wouldn't let well alone, and *he* called *that* philosophy."

"Well, and how do you like the country by this time, Bob?"

"I can't say much for the country."

"What is your objection to it?"

"Well, Sir, I have not seen a bit of ground yet over which a horse can gallop, and a man who has been all over it tells me there is none for the next five hundred miles to his knowledge."

"Nonsense, I see plenty of open spaces and meadows."

"Yes, but they are all boggy or swampy, or hard, there isn't half a mile you could train a horse upon."

"And what do you think of the people?"

"Not much, though I *have* thought much about them."

"Well, and what conclusion have you come to?"

"Why! on the whole," said Bob, "it's my opinion, Sir, that these Rooshians is not unlike the Jews in some partikilars, and uncommon like 'em in their looks; I knowed an old clothes-

man once, his name was Mordecai Isaacs; like most of 'em he would have cheated anybody he could, and he could have cheated any born creature he would but a Rooshian or a Yorkshireman. But, at least amongst his own people, he was very charitable, which was the main pint of difference betwixt him and many Christian traders, who cheat every body they can, and never deal with any body they cannot cheat, and besides is never charitable to nobody.

"Now the principal difference, as I can make out, between a Rooshian and an old clothes-man is that the Rooshian washes his-self once a week, and never changes his clothes till they drop off him. Now the Jew is always changing his clothes (which it is his business to do) and he only washes his-self as often as the Rooshian gets a new rig out. Then as for the likeness, the Jew calls any thing he is going to eat *kosha*, and the Rooshian calls it *kooshat*. And then they neither of 'em knows the walley of a roast sirloin of beef. The Rooshian cuts it up in bits and boils it into sour cabbage soup, which he calls *stchee*, and the Jew calls it *trifa;* and won't eat the joint at all. For people who *do* read their bible, which some says the Jews wrote it, I have always wondered at their standing so much in their own light as to prefer a brisket to

a sirloin which they do. Was you ever in Houndsditch or Duke's Place, Sir?"

"Never, Bob."

"Well," said Bob, complacently conscious of enlightening ignorance, "whenever you do go, Sir, you'll find them to be the famous places which they breeds in. Well, there, Sir, you may see 'em eating just the same salt cucumbers, the same salt raw Dutch herrings, and frying their fish just as brown and crisp in oil as the Rooshians do. Then the Jews never eats hares nor eels, nor the Rooshians neither, though they have plenty of hares, not on their heads and chins only, but running about the woods, brown, white and grey, like fancy rabbits, which I wouldn't have believed, barring I'd seen it, which I have. And they have eels as thick as a man's wrist, which seems really to have got so old and fat as to be unpleasant to their selves, like very stout old gentlemen, through the cruel ignorance and prejudice of them as wont eat 'em.

"Again your Jew, except upon the sly, will never eat lobsters nor crabs, nor periwinkles, nor shrimps, nor hot cockles.

"No more don't the Rooshians, which is a rule they never breaks through, seeing that there is none in the whole country as I hear tell."

"Well, Bob, and what is your theory. Do you think they are related?"

"The Rooshians is too sharp for that, Sir, they can give 'em weight and beat 'em by a distance in any mortal deal a gentleman could name or think of."

"Have they taken you in?"

"Only once, Sir."

"Well, you can't complain of that."

"No more I don't, Sir, because it perwented me from ever giving 'em another opportunity."

"And how did they do you?"

"In a pair of shoes, Sir."

"What were they too dear, or were they not good?"

"The soles were fastened on with glue, and when I walked out in the rain last night, I only brought back one of them, and that was in the crown of my hat to keep as a curiosity."

"Well, Bob, now to proceed to business. what do you say to those two bay horses the Prince has for sale. They are rather light for the saddle and would hardly carry me?"

"One may call them both light and heavy," replied Bob, "their limbs are too slight and the carcases upon them too bulky; as to their ever carrying you, Sir, I don't think that they can even carry their own weight with comfort to

theirselves, and I am sure they can't just now, that they are in regular Rooshian training— which is just like oxen fatted for a cattle show."

"I did not much like them."

"No, Sir, they'd be no credit to no stable."

"Not but what I believe these country horses to be generally better than they look."

"Not them two, at any rate; a horse may have all the pints about him, and yet not go after all; but if he hasn't the pints requisite, he never *can* go. Now the nags we are a talking of, want depth of chest and power about the hind quarters."

"Well, but supposing them perfect in every other part."

"Still, Sir, they'd only be bunches of dogs-meat, as I could 'splain to you in two minutes."

"Let us hear."

"In the first place, the power of the hind-quarters and the vigour of your horses' thighs is half the battle; *they* push him along the same as they does the grasshopper, he *can't* go without vigour *there*, no more than could a greyhound, or a cricket, or a flea. Then, when his hind limbs are of the right sort to carry him over the ground, look to the depth of his chest, that holds the wind-bags, and will make him

last the pace, when his hind legs will *push him up to the pace*. And when you find that right, it is time to look to his forelegs to see what stuff they are made of, and whether they are strong enough to bear his own weight and you'rn on the top of it (not forgetting the saddle) without going to pieces with the racket, when he does *go* the pace and *keep* the pace.

"It's quite true that a horse may have all these essential pints about him and be a bad one—like a watch, which may be brimful of works, and yet may never go 'cept when its carried. But, if he wants any of these pints, you may be sure that he never can turn out a clipper no more than a watch without any works inside of it can ever tell the clock at all.

"Foreigners, indeed, looks to the breadth of chest, which may be found uncommon fine in a broken-winded dray-horse, or they looks for a white stocking, or a white spot, or a grey hair in a horse's tail, to find fault with, by which the breeders and dealers always knows at once where to find the green spot in their eyes, and looks upon 'em *di*rect as safe to be done."

Here, a visitor being announced, the groom took his departure.

Being in want of information as to where he could find an English saddler, Bob Bridle was

under the necessity of repairing to the address given him by the English groom, whose acquaintance he did not much relish, on account of his being in his estimation not very creditable to the respectability of his cloth.

It was at an English public house or tavern, kept in a back street, and frequented by the English domestics brought over by Russian noblemen, and usually, in a short time, like all English servants on the continent, utterly spoiled and corrupted.

The high though uncertain wages, the occasional familiarity of their masters, who are accustomed in their hearts to consider as their equals any free inhabitants of Western Europe, and the example of their employers, all tend to lead them into habits of irregularity, intemperance, dissoluteness, and blackguardism; whilst the superiority which all Russian servants unhesitatingly admit—never pretending to sit at the same table as English domestics—together with the utter contempt which these entertain not only for their fellows but for their masters, frees them from all that salutary control, which in England restrains their irregularities.

Bob was ushered into a low parlour, where

ale, and porter, and soda-water were announced in gold letters on little framed boards suspended from the walls after the fashion of English public-houses.

The aspect of the room, and the appearance, costume, and manner of the guests recalled some low English tap-room near a horse-fair, filled with customers of a questionable description; with this difference, however, that its inmates mixed up with their slang and familiar nicknames an assumption of dignity of rank, which was taken quite gravely, and the style of *gentlemen*, and *gentlemanly* was adopted by them as a matter of serious right.

Bob looked to the walls, and above the chimney-piece he read this golden statute, "Any *gentleman* found cheating at play will be fined five shillings and given to the poor Thomas Webster," which local act of legislation, from its lofty disregard of punctuation, Bob for a moment interpreted as a threat of delivering the delinquent into the bondage of the worthy publican.

This notice had its counterpart on the opposite side of the apartment in the following announcement, which had been prompted not alone by the host's love of justice, but obviously

by his friendship for an individual whose name was modestly concealed, whilst his acquirements were respectfully set forth. "A gentleman, a friend of mine, kills rats, mice, bugs, and every other sort of varment."

The lad of whom Bob was in quest was seated drinking at a table, and, on seeing him enter, he nudged his companions, and said, "That's the sanctified chap as keeps a bible in one of his top boots; now you'll see a game."

"How are you?" said Bob.

"Well, now I've been in a way, like, since last we met; do you know that I begin to think that I am rayther a sinful creatur."

"It's not unlikely," said Bob drily.

"No, I ain't a-chaffing; do you know that I am beginning to think on my lonely condition in the world; my mammy's dead, and my daddy's gone, and my friends is all under ground."

"So I should have thought," replied Bob drily, "for I have only passed this street twice, and I have seed you twice going into that ere beer cellar."

Hereupon there was a general laugh at the expense of the other.

"That's too varmint a badger for you to draw," said one of his companions; for altogether, the dry, quiet manner, and self-possession

of Bob, together with the neatness and correctness of his professional costume, had produced a highly favourable impression on the whole assemblage, and had inspired them with about as much respect as they were capable of feeling for anything human.

"Perhaps, however," insinuated the taverner, "this gentleman would allow me to draw something for him."

"No, my friend," replied Bob. "I'm not to be drawed of the walley of a pint of beer just now. Thank *you*, all the same."

"Sir," said the individual, who had flatteringly compared him to a badger, "you mistake the matter, there's nobody here as wants to draw nobody of nothing; but I and these here gentlemen feels disposed to do the polite, and to stand treat, to welcome a strange gentleman who comes amongst us to anything he may choose to name, for the sake of cultivating his acquaintance."

"You are very good," said Bob; "but, in the first place, I havn't time, and in the next, it's my opinion, that a man, like a horse, should always take his drink sparingly when he has anything to do, and as abundantly as he pleases when he's out of service, or turned out to grass, but yet always at regular hours."

"And yet," said the taverner, "a glass of somethin' hot is always wholesome and refreshin' if you only take a snack with it; let me tempt you with a slice of broiled bacon or a bit of toasted cheese."

"Thank you," replied Bob, "I'd rather not make a mouse-trap of my inside at this time of day."

"Sir," said Bob's patron, "I honour your sentiments; but allow me to say that you are not up to the customs of this here city. As for having anything to do, that is all round my hat. Time was made for slaves and Rooshians; and we should demean ourselves into vulgar ignorant Rooshians by attending to it, should we not, gentlemen?"

A burst of approbation indicated the acquiescence of the bystanders in the maxim set forth by the speaker, and he continued:

"Perhaps, however, you prefers to stand treat yourself, in which case, we shall take the liberty of voting you into the chair;" and, adding to the insinuation of his words the eloquence of action, the orator rose and gracefully dragged forward an arm-chair.

"You are very kind," replied Bob; "but in three quarters of an hour I must be in the saddle; and I have some business to transact twixt this and then, which is just to get a new buckle sewed on to the girths of it."

"Really we can't excuse you; besides these here gentlemen would feel aggrawated if you refused them, it being the custom *among gentlemen* in St. Petersburg, which of course before you was told you would not be aware on."

"When I sets up for a gentleman," said Bob, "I'll take a leaf out of your book—so good morning, *gentlemen.*"

"What! you refuse the chair?"

"I am afraid of it, and that's the truth. Tom Spavin, who kept the 'Running Horse,' was so fond of taking the chair, that he died in the bench. But don't let the reflection spoil your conviviality," replied Bob Bridle, who, having beckoned aside his acquaintance, and learned the saddler's address, wished them all good morning, saying to himself: "Let them put that in their pipes and smoke it; and by the bye, now I think of it, I'll take a whiff myself as I go along" Drawing from an inner recess, he filled and lighted a short, blackened clay pipe, which his father had dispatched to him many years before—on his first going abroad with Mr. Mortimer—through a gentleman's servant travelling to the part of the continent which Bob, with his master, was then inhabiting. The anxious father had learned

with some horror from his son's letter, that the part of the world which they had reached was so "outlandish that there was not even such a thing as a clay pipe, or a pewter-pot, or a draught of porter to put into it, in the whole country, the foreigners giving their barley to the horses instead of making it into malt."

Now judging that such things indicated an utter inversion of all social order and could only be at the Antipodes, (whom old Bridle judged to be a fierce people of that name, armed with tomahawks and habitually standing on their heads) he made application first to the Captain of a South Sea whaler, and then to the steward of a West Indiaman, to induce them to take charge of a parcel, hearing that they were going across sea, "which was exactly where his son was gone." Being, however, at last put in the right channel, it was eventually transmitted to Bob in safety, containing amongst other articles, this piece of consolation, which, truth to say, reached him indeed in several pieces.

Nevertheless, the stump adhering to the bowl had been prevented from farther multiplying by Bob's exceeding care; for he usually kept it with his pocket-Bible in his right top boot, when not carrying it about his person.

"Oh! you are going to smoke in the street,

are you?" said his pseudo-friend with a grin from ear to ear.

"You don't see no objection, do you?"

"Oh no!"

"Considering that I have not set up for a gentleman yet."

And, shaking hands with as much sincerity as their betters might have done, they separated—Bob considering the whole party as an irredeemable set of vagabonds, from whom, as he was determined to get into no further scrapes, he had better keep away; and they judging him to be "a mean-spirited, pitiful fellow."

Bob was proceeding quietly along; he had nearly reached the saddler's, when a *boutoushnik,* one of the police watchmen, stepped up to him axe in hand, and unceremoniously seized him by the collar. Bob felt for a moment inclined to knock him down or trip him up; but, seeing that there was help at hand for his assailant, he restrained himself.

Bob was evidently in custody. The *boutoushnik* and a couple of assistant police soldiers, who had emerged from the watch-house or boudtke, displayed vociferous and savage indignation—intended to impose upon their prisoner—to whom, when they found that

he could not understand them, they made signs that he was to be marched away between two of them.

When Bob had thus proceeded a few paces, the boutoushnik called them back, and made unequivocal signs that he would be set at liberty on paying for it.

"Oh!" said Bob, "tricks upon travellers; I understand. Lead the way, if you dare; for I am not going to submit to such highway robbery!"

And the boutoushnik, judging from his manner that there was nothing to be extorted from his obstinate determination, with a malicious grin, directed them to proceed.

Bob raised his pipe to his mouth; but it was rudely snatched from him. At length, they reached the police station, with its high wooden turret, whence a look-out is kept for fires, and the signal made by elevating one or more globular Chinese lanthorns, according to the number of the Chast or division of the city in which it has broken out.

Bob Bridle was led by his captors through two or three dusky rooms filled with traders and moujiks, purposely habited in their dingiest attire, when obliged to repair to these dens of extortion.

He was kept standing by the police soldiers, who would not even allow him to sit for near three hours, until his case was inquired into by a man, whom from his close-fitting uniform and cocked hat, the groom recognised as a *naziratel*, or, as he termed it, nasty-rat—the police lieutenant. He very soon, however, seemed to give up all concern in it; and after another hour of anxious expectation, he was brought before the police-major in person. The police soldiers gave their evidence with great volubility, and apparently with a vivid sense of the enormity which the delinquent had committed, tempered only by their awe of the personage in whose presence they were delivering it. All this was written down in a book, and then the pipe was brought forward, examined, and evidently described with minuteness by the recording scribes. The major looked at the pipe and then at Bob, and scowled awfully.

"One would think," said Bob to himself, "that I had committed murder with that pipe, or that I had used it as Sampson did the jawbone of a jackass."

Here Bob was interrogated, and, as he understood not a word, he only shook his head.

All this was duly taken down.

"Well," thought Bob, "you seems to like the fun of writing down your own questions."

At length, with a wave of the hand, he was dismissed by the major; but not till his pockets had been rifled. Then he was taken down into a pestilential dungeon, where he was thrust in with a score of loathsome objects, covered with rags and vermin; and here, placing his back to the wall, because he dared not lie or sit down, he was obliged to make use of his fists to prevent being stripped by them at the outset.

Here, bewildered with this strange treatment he remained till nightfall. Then the dungeon doors opened and a dozen more individuals were let in: they had chains or cords about their legs and brooms in their hands: they were those forced during the day by the police to sweep the streets.

One of these individuals, more mud-bespattered than the rest, sank on a bench in sudden and overwhelming abstraction; he took off his cap, his head was close shaven. At length he seemed to gather something of the conversation of those around him, and turned suddenly about

to Bob Bridle, who was apparently the object of the remarks.

"You are an Englishman?" he inquired, to the utter surprise of the groom, in perfect English.

"Ay!" said Bob, "and I wish I had to do with Englishmen now, even if they was the worst of their sort as ever was whelped."

"Do you know what you are here for?"

"Lord love you, how should I?"

"Relate to me how and when you were arrested," and Bob, in his own peculiar manner, narrated all that had happened to him.

"Oh, it is quite plain," said the man with the shaven head, whom Bob could not help comparing to Joseph interpreting his fellow-prisoner's dream. "You were smoking in the street; now smoking is forbidden in any city in which there may be an imperial palace, under a penalty of one thousand paper roubles (£45). When the boutoushnik arrested you, if you had given him a silver rouble, he would have let you go; as it is, he gets nothing by your capture."

"That's a satisfaction," said Bob.

"When the naziratel interrogated you, a hundred roubles would still have got you free, and when you came before the major, perhaps

half the amount of the fine would still have satisfied him, for, although he will pocket the whole of it, it will be at the risk of having to disgorge it to one of his superiors."

"And what is to be done now?"

"Firstly, you must manage to communicate with your master, and in the next place, either you or he will have to pay the full fine."

"Two years' wages!" sighed Bob.

"You must give one of these police soldiers a silver piece, to take a scrap of paper for you to the house of your master."

"They have taken my money," replied Bob. "Do they mean to keep it?"

"As long as money is the circulating medium; but in that case you must bribe him with your coat or waistcoat."

Two hours afterwards, the fine was paid and Bob relieved.

"Well," said Bob, shaking hands with the stranger, "many thanks to you; but hang it I'm sorry to leave you here with such an English tongue in your head too. You will soon be out of trouble, I hope."

"Not in this world," said the other mournfully.

"Is there anything I can do to thank you."

"Nothing. Good bye! It is a happiness

for me to have served an Englishman," and, as he pressed Bob's hand, a tear glistened in his eye.

When the fine was paid, Bob also managed to get back his pipe on bribing the major with five shillings, and then, in a terrible state of mind, he hastened to his stable, for Lucifer had been locked up since the morning, and Bob had the key; a reflection which had rendered his captivity almost distracting. But, when Bob had duly attended to Lucifer, as he retired to rest, the visage of his strange companion in misfortune recurred to him incessantly: he could not help thinking that both the voice and features were familiar to him. Alas! how in his rags and misery should he have recognised his late master's friend Mattheus?

Just as a Russian father or husband is forbidden, if within a definite distance of a police office, to chastise his wife or children, so is the master forbidden to chastise his slave. But just as the husband or father can send the wife or children to the police to be punished without inquiry, so the master can and daily does by his slave. He despatches the slave to the station with an order for his corporeal punishment, and for making him sweep the public streets for a given number of days.

The Prince Isaakof had availed himself of this privilege. Mattheus, who had made all the necessary arrangements for the safety of his wife, had bowed with resignation, and was supported in his sufferings by the consciousness of an expiatory martyrdom.

CHAPTER IX.

When the Wednesday came, although Count Horace had previously determined to send an excuse to Madame Obrasoff, he felt himself impelled by an irresistible curiosity to study her character more narrowly, after the strange history which he had heard from the poet.

Somehow, her face was like those once seen in our sleep, which, dreamily indistinct, are constantly afterwards recurring to us, and so, to him that face had recurred, as he endeavoured to sink to rest on the preceding night, sometimes upon the lithe and graceful figure of her daughter Anna, and then the countenance and all had changed into Anna's, with her ingenuous smile, and the joyous sparkle of her quick bright eyes. And when he awoke, his thoughts had still been provokingly haunted by the mother and her sister-like daughter.

It was evident even to himself that they exercised a sort of magnetic fascination over him, derived perhaps from the very contrast offered between the mother's heartlessness and her exquisite sensibility of expression, and between the guileless frankness of Anna's manner and the consummate coquetry which he no longer doubted in the daughter of such a woman.

He endeavoured to recall dimly remembered stories, illustrative of the feeling, which finds a singular attraction in the very horrors which should have acted repulsively, such as leads men of some temperaments, by an irresistible impulse, to lean dangerously over a dizzy precipice, and which may have given rise to the tales of birds fluttering into the jaws of the serpent, and of mariners eagerly curious to catch the voices of the destroying syrens. At least, both mother and daughter had inspired in him a vivid interest, and, forewarned, he thought to amuse himself by playing off deceit against deceit, where any perfidy was excusable. Or, was it all perhaps a mere rhapsody of the poet's luxuriant imagination?

"You know Madame Obrasoff; pray can you tell me whether the Lieutenant R—, who was hanged after the revolt of 1825, was ever an enthusiastic admirer of hers?"

"He was," said Prince Ivan, "to answer your question. But who in Heaven's name has been talking to you about R—?"

"My informant was the poet."

"Ah!" replied Ivan, "he is allowed to speak, and he uses his tongue as a child in a crowd would a sharp sword. But don't you imitate him, my good fellow, and pray let all conspirators rest in their quiet graves, or in the full security of their mines, or chains, or dungeons. It is a very ungrateful theme, and though you, as a foreigner, may not fear to talk, you will very soon find every one as disinclined to listen as I am. Who was with you besides?"

"The Lieutenant Alexius only."

"Ah! a foolish, weak, poetic youth, the poet's follower and disciple, who will waste some ingenuity to accomplish the easiest thing in the world—getting sent to the Caucasus."

"Do you go to the imperial fête at Peterhoff to-night?"

"Do you?" returned the Prince. "You have an option. I have none. I cannot venture to stay away."

Peterhoff is situated upwards of twenty miles from St. Petersburg, on a slight elevation, which overlooks the gulf of Finland. It is the Versailles of Russia. Here, round the palace,

with its extensive parks, and gardens, and waterworks, a little town has gathered, chiefly consisting of the boxes of the nobility and courtiers of both descriptions, who have so crowded together in their anxiety to get near the Imperial sun as to raise the value of ground to an enormous price by the competition.

These Russian courtiers may be designated as of two descriptions, because there are those who—as all other courtiers do—gather around majesty to secure, like jackals, the leavings and the offal of the lion's share; and then there is another, the more numerous class, peculiarly Russian, consisting of some of the wealthiest nobles, whose fortune allows them to scorn not only the pitiful pay, but the rich perquisites, of any office in the empire. These attend the court, not for the positive gain of what they can get, but to secure, by attaining office, the negative advantage of protection to themselves and their families from the severity with which people of their rank are apt otherwise to be treated not only by the sovereign, but through all the grades to which his authority sub-descends.

It thus happens that, within a few cannon-shot of woods which have never been cleared, and of land of mere nominal value, the most extravagant prices of any in the world are paid

for building-ground; and on this account the villas and cottages are comparatively small and contracted, and are often reared of perishable boards of deal, imitating the gothic sculptured stone, at an expense which stone would not elsewhere have occasioned.

From his palace at Peterhoff, which stands midway, the Emperor has one eye on his capital and the other on the island and town of Cronstadt,—the Portsmouth of his empire, and the chief port of his fleet. On the other hand, he is within only a few miles of the summer camp of Krasnoe-Zelo, where all his guards assemble.

Just out of the little town itself, in fact divided from it by the width of the road, is the camp of the cadet schools. Some thousand boys, the sons of officers or of the nobility of the empire, forced into this service by a thousand complicated and vexatious regulations—dressed in stiff uniforms and armed with tiny muskets—manœuvre under the Emperor's eye, are exercised in firing Lilliputian cannon, and sleep under pigmy tents, whilst just off the shore is a little fleet entirely manned by the naval cadets, all youths of corresponding age.

A gateway and of course a guard-house bar the high road to Oranienbaum, which passes

within the precincts of the Imperial town; and, this entrance once past, beware! You are within the outer porch of the temple—approaching the holy of holies—and you must neither smoke, nor run, nor laugh merrily, nor talk loudly, even in the lanes and along the hedges and dead walls, where etiquette reigns triumphant. The roads and streets are swept more clean than even in those fabulously tidy towns of Holland, where I have seen an old woman come out and pick up a cigar end and four leaves and throw them into the canal.

The villa of the Obrasoffs consisted of a sort of Gothic tower, with an adjoining wing, built up of brick and stucco; but there was a vast greenhouse adjoining, and the large windows of plate and stained glass opened upon a little bowling green and English garden, intersected with neat gravel-walks, and surrounded by a richly figured railing of cast iron, whilst the foot pavement that ran along-side the enclosure consisted of slabs of the same metal, cast in an equally elaborate pattern.

The early hour of two had been fixed for dinner, in consequence of the fête at the palace in the evening. Horace was received by Madame Obrasoff and her youngest daughter.

The room opened upon the lawn, and as

the morning was a little chilly, some fragrant faggots of cedar-wood and a piece of English kennel coal, had been lighted in the grate which filled a sculptured chimney-piece of marble inlaid with cameo-like medallions of Sèvres bisque, the whiteness of whose graceful classic figures was relieved on a ground of pale blue.

The hangings were also of light blue damask silk, overrun with wreathing white convolvuluses and roses, and matched the colour of the tesselated pavement, which was left visible within a yard of the white marble wainscoting, by a velvet-like carpet in which deep blue predominated.

Here and there, on the chimney-piece and the console tables, and on little consoles of antique bisque, were exquisite figures of gilt bronze to imitate a sort of bronze of gold, because the radiant metal seen piercing through its purple oxide, gave it a kind of bloom, which harmonised with the surrounding hues, and seemed reflected from them.

Scattered about were instruments of music, books, and engravings, and those costly sketches, whose hasty boldness speaks rather of the artist's fame than conveys any distinct evidence of his merit.

It will be readily imagined that the ethereal hue which pervaded the apartment was not exactly favourable to the pale and fairy-like beauty of Madame Obrasoff; but then, either by chance or design, she had seated herself just where the light reflected through one of the coloured panes caught her distant figure in its faint and roseate halo.

Next to her sits an elderly gentleman in uniform. He looks rather like a high-bred German than a Russian; his figure is good, his carriage soldier-like; the baldness which his grey hair leaves as it recedes, gives to his forehead the appearance of being high and ample. There is a natural frankness and jollity about the expression of his countenance which habit or position has restrained, and there is that impertinent and suspicious inquisitiveness about his grey eyes, which men of very limited perception acquire in their aspect when long accustomed to peer into the motives of their fellow-men.

There is nothing to indicate superiority of intellect; but in his manner, as he signs to Madame Obrasoff not to introduce them, there obtrudes an imperious and involuntary hauteur derived from the consciousness of power. For this man *is* very powerful.

There is a carriage and four this moment

passing along the road, containing within it a nobleman and his wife, of family more ancient than the Emperor's—starred, titled, and ribboned—whilst their fortune matches their rank. Well; if this elderly gentleman were to beckon the nobleman to step out of his vehicle, and to remain with his wife upon their knees on the high road till he relieved them, they would do it, and they must do it for—although not so powerful as he will afterwards become—they know well enough that he is Count Benkendorf, to whom the Emperor's whole power is delegated as grand master of the secret police; whose absolute authority every one in the Empire, the princes of the blood inclusive, must unhesitatingly obey; and who has no account to render to any one for the exercise of it but to his Imperial master.

It struck Horace that he had seen him before, although he could not remember where; and so he had, for, as chief of the secret police, he personally interrogates and converses with every stranger arriving in the capital, only leaving this business to his lieutenant, the General Duppelt, when unavoidable duties prevent him.

There was an affectionate cordiality in Madame Obrasoff's welcome; and as she gently pressed his hand there was a beseeching expression in her speaking eye, which glancing

in the direction of the grand master, seemed to say that there was something to explain, and to make the most winning apology before her words expressed it. They were to dine at five instead of at two, "because a very charming person, whose acquaintance would compensate him for any number of hours of *ennui*, had proposed to join them."

Feodora Obrasoff received him with reserved but easy gravity, answering only in monosyllables to his attempts at conversation, though sometimes looking up from her book of engravings to survey him very minutely and intently, as she might have done by one who had been the subject of much conversation for either good or evil.

"But where is Anna?" said the mother.

"Anna is in her boudoir," replied Feodora. "I have sent to her three times:—she will not come."

"But does she know that the *Comte de Montressan is here?*" said the mother.

And, in a few. minutes, Anna came bounding joyously into the room, and, after having welcomed him with frank cordiality, she turned with a distant respect almost amounting to dislike towards the grand master, although his salutation was good-humouredly courteous.

"Ah!" quoth he, aloud. "Youth! youth! youth! — how disdainfully it turns from our sixty summers towards congenial youth!"

Horace's lip curled insensibly, and he thought "this is a badly got up and well-acted comedy of *La fille à marier*; but each one to his part."

The sun was beginning to shine out temptingly, and a ramble in the imperial gardens was proposed; but first Anna insisted on shewing Horace through the green-house, and into the boudoir of herself and sister.

The green-house was very properly, less a botanical collection, or the collection of a market gardener in which the classification and economy of space had been borne in view for scientific or commercial purposes, than a vast and tastefully arranged exotic bower, adorned with statues and with fountains.

It led through a screen of verdure, and through doors of painted glass, into a sort of circular Moorish court; it was paved with white marble, whilst the arches were moulded into beautiful arabesques, modelled after the walls of the Alhambra, and the glass between them, kept in a heat which compensated the palm tree for the hot sun of Africa, whilst its broad leaf partially shaded the glare of light.

The passion-flower and the vine too, intruding their stems through narrow apertures from the green-house, helped to exclude the sun's rays from the delightful retreat which they invaded. There was a basin in the middle filled to the brim with crystal water, and an exquisitely sculptured water goddess seemed to hold up delightedly a water lily with leaves and buds of gold; but the lily was represented by the fountain itself, which issued out of the hollow stem, and formed with the pellucid fluid exactly the cup of the flower. The boudoir might almost be said to form part of the court, for it was entirely without windows—open on one side—and consisting of a sort of alcove receding behind several of the arches.

This recess was hung with green and white striped silk, wherever it was not hidden by spacious glasses, and a broad luxurious divan surrounded the walls, its cushions covered with the same material. The deep soft velvet-like plush of the Aubusson carpet, which trenched upon the white marble pavement of the court, was of a deep grass green, and in its pattern were woven irregular groups of the early crocus of the spring, and of the short stemmed tulip. There was a small round table, a slab of malachite supported by cupids of or-moulu, whose wings seemed outspread to assist their dimpled childish arms to bear aloft

their burthen. But most remarkable was a very arge folding screen: on the reverse its black ground was adorned with flowers and birds, to whose gorgeous wings the brilliancy of inlaid mother of pearl had given more than the refulgence of their real plumage; on the other side it was covered with beautiful sketches of figures or engravings admirably coloured. This was evidently a great object of Anna's pride, for many of these paintings were the production of her own or of her sister's pencil.

The productions of the two sisters differed as they did themselves in temper—those of Feodora being minute copies, Anna's exceeding anything he had ever seen from the hands of an amateur.

But what amused him most was the *naiveté* with which the Peri of this fairy bower, pointed out and dwelt on the merits of her own works. Those of her sister were mere careful copies perhaps retouched by a master's hand, whilst her own were full of life and spirit, and genius—and all this she unhesitatingly pointed out, and then inquired which of their styles he preferred, in a tone of grave earnestness, as if she took the deepest interest in his decision.

" Ah!" said Horace, " this is a face I have seen somewhere."

" This is my performance!" answered Anna

with delight, " it is a sketch of Madame L—— from recollection."

" I remember now, I saw her pass my window one evening in your carriage."

" Perhaps," said Anna, " my memory is the worst in the world; but I will tell you where you have met her. One Thursday night on the 9th of last month, after dinner at Madame ——'s."

" And how do you remember that so minutely with the worst memory in the world?"

" Oh!" said Anna with simplicity, looking him full in the face, " though you were only presented to us the next night, it was there I first saw you."

" Do not imagine that I forget," answered Horace; " but you may conceive how agreeably I am flattered, to find that you should recollect the circumstance."

" Oh, I ought to remember it. Look, here is your face, as I sketched it from memory on the following morning."

And, to his utter surprise, she opened a drawing book, and pointed out a finished sketch of himself, full of all that general and spirited resemblance which portraits from recollection bear, when possessed of any likeness.

" Ah!" said Horace, " how could I be ignorant of the happiness of attracting so much of your attention?"

" It was to please my mother," added Anna; " she entreated me to endeavour to recall your features upon paper the ensuing morning."

" Your Lady mother and yourself have flattered me beyond expression," said Horace; but he thought too much sweetness will even clog the wings of the butterfly.

" She said *not*," replied Anna, " and therefore I have kept the sketch myself. Is it not very like him?" she continued, addressing Feodora, who had just entered to summon them.

" Rather so," replied Feodora, " but there are several faces in that book which could have been altered into quite as good a likeness."

" Ah," thought Horace, " there is a family sting as well as honey."

" Feodora seeks only careful imitation in her sketches," said Anna. " I strive after the beautiful. I think it a Vandalism of art to reproduce anything on paper or on canvass which is not so in nature. Look at these two faces."

" Here then," said Horace, " you have attained it, — as well as if you had portrayed your own."

" My own!" said Anna, turning round and looking attentively in the glass. " *My* Tartar features, *my* Asiatic eyes and colourless complexion! Is that all the compliment you have to pay to the beauty of these two faces? Consider that

they are both real living portraitures, though my ideal of beauty."

"Is it possible," thought Horace, "that the vanity of the woman can be merged in the vanity of the artist?"

The figures he was invited to inspect were those of two females, utterly differing, it would appear, in station, and both youthful and lovely: the one was dressed in robes of state and wore on her head a tiara of jewels; the other was in the simple costume of a Polish peasant girl.

The face and figure of the peasant girl were both beautiful; but, as he dwelt on the other painting he was more and more struck with the fascinating sweetness of its expression, which whether faithfully reproduced from the original or whether added by the imagination of the painter, did her equal credit; and when he had laid it down, he felt impelled to take it up again to give another long glance of admiration, which he now earnestly expressed for the performance.

"And you say that these are both real portraits? You have, I am sure, transformed with your magic pencil, women into angels."

"One of these portraits is not flattered," an-

swered Anna, "of the other you shall judge yourself; for you will meet the person at dinner."

But here Anna hastened to put on her shawl and bonnet; and the whole party were soon rambling in the gardens.

If the inhabitants of Peterhoff are cramped for space, — generally so valueless in Russia, — everything, grounds, park, and gardens, connected with the Imperial establishment, luxuriates in a superfluity of room, which seems to typify the narrow limits of individual privilege and liberty, as contrasted with the boundlessness of sovereign power.

In these gardens they passed by English cottages, copied minutely from pictures. There were the deep thatch, the latticed window, the climbing woodbine and roses; though, on approaching them, Horace discovered that the thatch was of sheet iron painted to imitate straw.

They had wandered on for some time when it happened that they somehow became separated from Madame Obrasoff and the grand master.

"Come!" said Anna, "one does not often get one's liberty. Now for a long ramble."

"But mamma will look for us," said Feodora.

"She must look in vain then. At all events

I will go; and what can you both do but follow?"

"What could I wish to do but follow?" said Horace.

"You hear," said Anna to her sister, "Count Horace will accompany me; so, whether you come or not, I shall go on."

But when Anna had led them from one shady spot to another for nearly half an hour, they were suddenly met by an officer in uniform, who approached them with considerable trepidation.

"My children!" he said, with a hasty bow of recognition, "I do not know how you have got past the line of huntsmen, but you will come directly face to face with the Emperor. He is out shooting to-day."

"See what you have done, Anna!" said Feodora, reproachfully.

"What must we do, General?" said Anna.

"What you must do?" replied the General in some perplexity, "why we must contrive to hide you somewhere. He will not be out another hour."

"And if we *do* meet him," said Horace, "his Majesty, I am sure, will not hurt us."

"But if he do meet you, it may hurt *me*, Sir; the fellows who have let you pass shall smart for it."

"Oh yes," said Anna, "it is better not to meet him."

The General made a signal, and immediately half a score of jagers or huntsmen, appeared on different sides as if by magic, like the Highlanders in the Lady of the Lake at the summons of Roderick Dhu.

"Now," said the General, stepping into the copse where there was a party of these militarily attired foresters, "you must remain here till the Imperial party passes; for when once the Emperor descends thus far, he will not at this hour turn back again."

To the surprise of Horace, he found that these foresters were holding, one of them a pheasant, another a hare, another a fox.

"What are these, Sir," said Horace to the General, who, — the cause of his agitation, once removed,—became very polite and courteous.

"These," replied the General, "are to be let loose from the brushwood should the Emperor pass this way; a little farther on, in that copse to the left, there are foresters with two deer and a wolf; and just look! floating on that rivulet, do you see six or eight wild ducks? Well, they are tied down to little posts in the water, and there are two men cleverly concealed

in the rushes, who hold a string, which pulls a sort of trigger, to let them off at the opportune moment, which will be if his Majesty should approach within shot of them. I flatter myself that it is skilfully managed."

"But," said Horace, "is there no wild game?"

"Dear me," replied the General, "do you suppose that game is with us as in the West of Europe? We have plenty of it, because we have an immense extent of territory; but it is thinly scattered through dense woods and morasses, the most impenetrable in the world, where its pursuit becomes a real labour instead of a pastime; and then it would be immensely difficult and expensive to preserve it; and as the Emperor rarely shoots we thus insure him good sport."

At this moment some shots were fired at a short distance from them; and then the Emperor, with two of his officers, emerging from a path which led into a shrubbery, walked right up to the stream.

"Now!" whispered the General, who evidently took all the interest of a manager of a theatre in some point of scenic interest. "Now—ah! those fools—ah! that is right;" and up flew some of the ducks, whilst others dived.

The Emperor fired and missed; and then one of his companions fired after him, and missed also; but the third brought down one bird and struck a handful of feathers with the discharge of his second barrel from another.

"Ah! he is the most skilful," said Horace.

"Which?" said the General, sharply, and with an accent of contempt which he instantly checked.

"I am sure," said Anna, in English, "that the mo[illegible] skilful of the two courtiers was not the one who hit."

But the attendants having furnished them with fresh guns, the Imperial party proceeded, and a deer running slowly out before the Emperor, he fired, and struck it down; and then approaching in high good humour, he beckoned to some one, which made the party think that they were discovered.

"Hush!" said the General, "do you not see it is the Empress?" and the tall, somewhat slight figure of the Empress was seen approaching with the wife of General Friedrich, the companion of her youth.

The Empress herself frequently shoots; but that day she had declined it.

She rallied the Emperor a little upon his want of skill; and then she proposed to fire a

few shots with pistols, which the *grand veneur* caused speedily to be procured; and in a few instants a post was stuck up, to the top of which was attached a live pigeon.

The Emperor fired; and then it surprised Horace to see the Empress, with her peculiarly feminine aspect and her frail wrist, raise the pistol and fire, and then again; and at the second shot she hit the bird. A second pigeon was stuck up, and after several ineffectual attempts, the Empress again hit it; and then the Imperial party moved forward, the Empress still jesting with her husband on her superiority of skill.

The General was evidently delighted. "All has passed off well, thank God," he said.

"But tell me," said Horace, "does the Emperor know that all these birds and beasts are let free for him to fire at when he passes?"

"God bless you, no; that would destroy all the illusion."

"But it strikes me that with a gun in my hand, I should not be long in finding it out. A sportsman would readily perceive that game of such varied descriptions does not come across his path to be fired at thus."

"That," said the General, "is because you have been accustomed to see differently; but

if you never had? And then would you have the Emperor keep whole battalions of foresters and huntsmen and a vast establishment, and not be able to enjoy his sport without more trouble than it would cost a peasant?"

The Imperial party being sufficiently distant, a signal was made, and the foresters were seen gathering in scores from the places where they had lain so skilfully concealed. Horace just thought it possible that a good deal of the same scenic representation might be got up throughout the Empire to keep its master in good humour.

"What sort of woman is the Empress?" said Horace, as soon as he was alone with the two sisters. "Is she accounted kind-hearted, or severe, or indifferent?"

But even Anna looked about as embarrassed and shocked, as a young girl might do in England before whom some opinion startlingly blasphemous had been propounded; and then she said hurriedly as if to dismiss the subject:

"No one speaks of the Emperor's wife!"

"But does she do good or evil?"

"She laughs and dances," replied Anna, and then took up abruptly another subject.

It was just dinner-time when they returned. Anna and Feodora flew to complete their toilet,

and Horace was ushered into the receiving room.

He looked with some curiosity amongst the three lady guests for the original of the beautiful portrait of the boudoir; but there was only one amongst them who was young or beautiful. Now, though she was singularly handsome, her loveliness was of a kind utterly distinct from that which he had seen reproduced by Anna's pencil, and which dwelt on his recollections as a very few of the most exquisite works of the brush or chisel are apt to linger on the memory of those who have been intensely impressed with their perfections.

And yet—had it not been for the predetermined bent of his curiosity—the charms of the lady in question were such as might have gratified, instead of disappointing, the most fastidious anticipation.

Her complexion, features, and figure, were rather the type and ideal of the Polish than of the Teutonic stamp of beauty. Her "Asiatic eye" was quite Polish with its mingled softness and brilliancy, when

> Through it stole a tender light
> Like the first moonrise of midnight,
> Large dark and swimming in the stream,
> Which seemed to melt to its own beam.

Besides, a touch of suffering and of anxiety had chastened the bright expression of the woman's eyes into that of the angel's—the angel's, when liquid and thoughtful with its watchful sympathy.

Her dress was so simple as to contrast strangely with some jewels of inestimable value; the cost of a vast estate worn so carelessly denoting inordinate wealth.

The lady—for Horace had not caught her name—was treated with a deference which she endeavoured to repress, and she was just then in conversation with a tall, elderly military dandy.

The tightness of his uniform, or its padding, retained his figure in all the symmetry for which it had formerly been distinguished, and the most perfect of black wigs, the most natural of teeth, and the dye and curl of his mustachios, had baffled, if not the march of time, at least ten years of the trace of its triumphs. His very dark eyes—of the harsh Mongolian black—sparkled as brightly in their unquenched fire as the diamond stars which, together with ribbons, crosses, medals, and silver lace, relieved the invisible green of his uniform.

In his manner he still affected the graces for which he had been distinguished twenty years before; but for which he had grown too antiquated, notwithstanding all the arts of the

toilet; for he was no other than the Count Tchor.... notorious at the Court of Napoleon for his wit, his elegance, and his successes.

But his conquests had not all been of the drawing-room or the boudoir; for the plan of Napoleon's projected invasion had been entrusted to female discretion, and female discretion had confided it to the sympathy or the carelessness of the handsome diplomate.

Now how much this trustful discretion was at fault, the sequel, which is matter of history, proved; for the diplomate suddenly vanished from Paris, the lover and the secret taking wing together.

Napoleon who, when too late, was made aware of it, caused him to be pursued—a pursuit which, if successful, would probably have deprived the object of it from showing the varied nature of his talents; for, after safely carrying his information to his master, he next appears upon the scene—not in his ball dress, or triumphing in deceits, red tape, and sealing wax, and other weapons of the grand anti-veracious trade of diplomacy; but in the character of the fiery partisan, leading a band of Cossacks by unheard of marches, amongst the boundless steppes and forests, and frozen marshes, to hover on the rear or intercept upon their passage, the

conquered of the elements, the children of the *grande armée*, the men miraculously seduced in one generation from the propagandism of the wildest democracy to the support of utter despotism, by the bauble of military glory held before their eyes, and typified by a bit of red ribbon, suspending eighteen-penny worth of silver.

And then when the roar of armies which had gradually receded from the ears of France, like ebbing waters, had begun so fatally to flow in a tide of foreign invasion; when Leipsic had seen

> The Saxon jackal leave the lion's side,
> To turn the bear's, the wolf's, and fox's guide,

and the continental allied armies advanced so cautiously on the soil of France—the soil which bore those redoubtable Frenchmen who had visited every capital in Europe, and whom no one but the *red islanders*, since the death of old Suwarrow had ever matched in fair and equal fight—then, when three fourths of what was done so cautiously, was accomplished by Alexander's Russians, headed by German leaders or moved according to German counsels,, then Count Tchor . . . . the ex-dandy, ex-diplomate, and ex-partisan leader, was again prominently brought

into notice as commanding a division of the Russian army, which advanced with a successful boldness, of which none of his colleagues with immeasurably greater means had given evidence.

Since then the Count, now the Prince Tchor . . . . had risen to the dignity of minister of war, and of one of the favourites of the Emperor Nicholas.

He was then the only thorough Russian really possessed of power—the antagonist of the German Diebitsch and of all Germans, whose views he incessantly thwarted, being altogether the personification, it cannot be said of Muscovite interests, but of the feelings of all Muscovite *employés*, from the private soldier upwards.

Strikingly anti-teutonic, he was an apt and favourable specimen of the higher classes of the Muscovite race—not of the peaceful and fair-haired majority, with their inborn love of trade, descending from the mixture of the Sclavonians with the aboriginal Fins; but of the darker race arising from the conjunction of the Sclavonic or of the Sclavonic and Finnish with their Mongolian and Tartar conquerors.

With talents, which never amounted to genius, he had always striven rather to seem to know than to know; but his powers of perception and reflection, as far as they did extend, were

rapid; and he was the man of moral courage and promptness, of intrigue and action.

Like all his class, in reality possessing an equal amount of ability to the Russo-Germans, to whom the Russian Empire has so long realized the land of promise—those Russo-Germans theorising even in their pettiest intrigues—he had moreover the advantage over them—which all his class possess—of qualities which enabled him to make the most of his talents, just as his countrymen have the art of spreading a very slender stock of knowledge, like a thin leaf from the gold-beater, over an immense superficial surface.

Thus, in a negotiation, or at the head of an army, the Russian would have seized the entangling thread, which the slower Russo-German genius would have discovered on the morrow, (a day too late to act upon it,) or, where it baffled them both, the German would pause to cogitate where the Russ would have cut the Gordian knot, by a determined resolution or with the sword of battle.

It might be imagined that these natural advantages would suffice to secure the preponderance of Russian candidates for office; but that would be to reckon without the smile of imperial favour, which is to the social world of these

realms just what the sun is to the material, —without whose vivifying influence no seeds or roots, the most useful or noble, can pierce through the frozen superstratum of the soil to the life of active vegetation—and the sun of imperial favour is so mistrustful, or so far mistaken, as only to shine on those who have no root amongst the Muscovite population,—except at intervals, in a few rare instances,—and the Prince Tchor .... was one of the most remarkable of these.

Before the dinner, that very barbaric prelude to the meal was served which jars so singularly with the splendour and elegance of a fashionable Russian table, which the world has been ransacked with more than Roman avidity to supply, appropriating its most varied delicacies, its customs, and its gastronomic skill.

Let the reader imagine smoked goose and smoked salmon, hung beef, and Bologna sausages, anchovies, and salt herrings, sardines, and fresh and dried caviar, grated Parmesan, and Cheshire cheese, and in fact, everything for which the oil and Italian warehouseman can lay the animal kingdom under contribution to supply his trade, served up with liqueurs and sweet wines; and all to preface a repast which is always tediously copious, the French kitchen

appearing to put forward its productions in a formidably numerous array, as if alarmed by the allied army of Russian, French, Italian, and English dishes, which find their place at the overloaded board besides.

The idea irresistibly arises—if these things be intended to whet the appetite as asserted—that they must be provided for those insatiable appetites, *qui viennent en mangeant*, or else to take off the edge of a gluttony, dangerous to itself in the first eagerness of its unblunted fervour.

But a Russian hastened to explain to Horace, that the custom so universally adopted was foreign in its origin, being imported from the north-eastern German provinces—the Russian bee, like the oriental bee in general, collecting a very questionable sort of honey, when it wanders abroad from flower to flower; which may fully account for the strong disinclination of the great majority of orientals to all innovation.

"With us," said the Russian, "it is imitation; with its German originators, greediness—the besetting sin of our worthy neighbours."

"I can only say," replied Horace, "that from Berlin to Königsberg, I could not find white bread even at the post-houses."

"Well, but it is no proof of frugality when people have not wherewithal; besides, one may show moderation over a *foie gras* and greediness over black bread. I have heard a doctor say, that, in the statistics of European ailments, the largest number of broken constitutions, arose with men in France from their devotion to the fair sex—though not from broken hearts—in England from their copious potations; and in Germany from the singular want of foresight, which Providence has exhibited in not fitting their stomachs to their appetites."

But he did not add that the French doctor had told him so on the occasion of his consulting him for an asthma, arising from a cold which he had caught by attending the ceremony of the blessing of the waters by the Emperor, and standing in twenty degrees of cold, bare-headed, and in a thin coat which was worn in compliment to his majesty; whereupon the doctor had added "that, in Russia, he was prepared to find the most general predisposing cause of illness to exist with one half in determination of blood to the head, and of injuries of the worn out spine with the other; from the incessant prostrations of the peasantry, and the perpetual bending of the back with their masters."

The dinner itself was like dinners all over the

world, differing only in the fish, which being caught in rivers that run into inland seas, or to the brackish waters of the Baltic, were—except the salmon—peculiar, and inferior of their kind to those which in the salt ocean swarm on our western shores. And then the love of all that was costly had been,—as is so frequently the case elsewhere,—allowed to predominate over the general good taste which had presided over the arrangement of the banquet. There was, for instance, a tureen of soup of an unsightly size, and a dish of fish inordinate in magnitude; but then all present knew that it was soup made with the precious sterlet—and champagne. And the fish was a sterlet of unusual size and rarity.

It is not unlike, and little superior to brill in flavour; but then, perhaps, that fish had cost a thousand roubles. And of course there was every kind of wine excepting Russian; not forgetting the most expensive Tokay, made from the over-ripe grape, when, by the mere pressure of its own weight, the richness of its juice drips into vessels placed to receive it, and sold at a price somewhat exceeding its weight in silver. There are many districts of Spain, where wine of a similar quality is made and sold for a few halfpence, and drunk unwittingly

by the population of the spot; but then, if ever discovered by the Russian gourmet, the baseness of its price will always be a bar to its competing with Tokay.

Now, as the attention of Horace was directed towards the beautiful and mournful face of the lady, who seemed the point of universal attraction and the object of general deference, he could not help thinking that he had seen her before; and then on a sudden, a light broke in upon his memory, to which, indeed, he would scarcely have trusted had it not been that he felt he could not easily be mistaken, when he only had to tax it back for a few hours.

He felt satisfied that hers was the face he had seen so admirably represented in the boudoir of the daughters of his hostess, though not the one by which he had been so much struck, and of which he had been so fully prepared to meet the original, but that of the Polish peasant girl in her national holiday costume. But the traces of a few years, and still more of deep anxieties, had so far changed her features that this, as much as the difference of attire and station, had prevented him from at once recognizing the original. He was deliberating in his own mind, whether her portrait had been taken in a fancy suit, or whether the peasant girl had perhaps

risen—as her beauty merited—to rank and wealth; when the minister of war *à propos* of a glass of water, related an anecdote which he appeared to think too good to be monopolised by a single pair of ears.

"After the allies," said Count Tchor .... "had crossed the Rhine, I happened to occupy the city of Liege in the Low Countries. I had not been in the place above a few hours, when a worthy citizen forced his way into my presence, panting for breath like a hunted hare, and threw himself at my feet, imploring my protection."

"'Against what,' said I, 'do you wish me to protect you?'

"'Please, your Excellency, against the fiercest and most unreasonable gentleman of a bearded Cossack, who is quartered upon me.'

"'Let me hear what cause of complaint he has given you.'

"'Allow me to take breath, your Excellency, and you *shall* hear.'

"'When he presented his billet, he began by flourishing his whip, and I assure you he was received with every mark of attention, politeness, and respect. The first thing he asked for was *de l'eau.* Well, your Excellency, I thought that if his manner was peremptory, his demands had been hitherto so moderate that I could not

hasten too speedily to comply with them; and I presented to him a glass of the clearest, coldest, and purest spring water. Hereupon he drew out his sword, and with a horrible expression of countenance made sign for me to drink it. Though his request was strange, I drank it, affecting to smile pleasantly, and then he said again *de l'eau.* When I brought the second glass, he flourished his sword more angrily than before, and again made me swallow it, and then he asked for more water!

"'Thinks I, perhaps he is afraid the water is poisoned, so wondering at my own stupidity, the next time I brought in the jug, and voluntarily tasting, I washed out the glass, and filling it to the brim, respectfully tendered it to him. But, nothing soothed, again he made me swallow it, and fill another bumper. I fell upon my knees; but glass after glass he made me gulp down, till I came to the ninth; and then your Excellency, *as I only hold two chopines*, feeling that the next would burst me, I frankly confess, that I took to my heels, and Providence, which brought me safe into your presence, I trust will interest your Excellency in my melancholy fate.'

"When he had concluded this pathetic appeal, I sent for the Cossack, and inquired the motives of his conduct; when it appeared that, having been told that *eau-de-vie* was the French for brandy, he had remembered only the

word *eau;* and that, when the worthy citizen had brought him water, feeling aggrieved at the pertinacious jest which he imagined his host to be perpetrating, he had determined to try whether he could not bring him to reason, by making him swallow, as fast as he brought it, a beverage so very little to his own taste."

After dinner, the last of the guests left were the fair Pole and Count Horace, who was to repair with the Obrasoffs to the Imperial gardens.

Like a true Pole, she kindly expressed her sympathy with his countrymen; and then, looking to the hour, she rose. Madame Obrasoff called for the carriage of "the Duchess," and she departed; but with an "*au revoir,*" and not with an "*adieu,*" and as the hostess, with unusual deference, led her to her very carriage, Horace just caught the words as they left the room, "I should have been delighted to stay with you . . ." and then again, the last of the sentence—"him!" . . . . probably audible from its emphasis.

"Ah!" thought Horace, when he recalled the anxiety and inquietude of that sweet face—"some victim to her own or to her family's ambition!"

"Who is that very interesting person?"

"That," said Anna, "is the Duchess of Lowicz."

"The Duchess!" repeated Horace, reflecting

that he had never heard of Dukes or Marquises, or Viscounts in the Russian Empire."

"She seems very amiable; but her mind appears unceasingly disturbed by a painful disquietude."

"Yes," returned Anna, "how anxious she was to leave us!"

"And what is the object of her solicitude—a child?"

"No," replied Anna, "a husband."

At this moment the return of Madame Obrasoff interrupted the conversation; and, tea having been served, the ladies prepared to accompany Horace to the fête.

CHAPTER X.

It was one of those days on which the Emperor of all the Russias—that is to say, of great Russia, and of little Russia, of black Russia, of white Russia, and of red Russia—throws open his palaces and gardens to receive all his subjects, from the highest to the lowest.

But there is all the haughtiness of absolutism even in the apparent humility of this universal condescension.

The princes of the monarchies of Western Europe, in all the arrogance of their superiority, always tacitly acknowledged that there were individuals or classes approaching sufficiently near them to render it imperative upon Kings to treat them with respect. In England, for instance, a crowned head has been heard to repeat a sentiment, engrafted in the convictions

of his nobility and gentry, that the King was only the first gentleman in his realm.

But an Emperor of Russia is raised too high above his subjects to take into consideration these differences of rank; like a giant gazing down upon a busy nest of pismires, the distinction between the lowliest and the proudest of his slaves is supposed to be imperceptible to eyes accustomed to scan the wide distance between the condition of the loftiest of those who crawl beneath him and his own. This is the implied moral, too, of these universal receptions, where the vermin of the slave and the brilliants of the noble are scattered alike, as they jostle together on the gravelly paths of the gardens of Peterhoff, in the rush of the crowd for whom a hundred thousand lamps have made an artificial daylight. It is a lesson not intended to upraise the humble portion of the people; but to show the aspiring the vanity of their pretensions. Talent, and birth, and wealth, and learning, may be distinctives among the common herd by inter-comparison; but, at the footsteps of the autocratic throne, they must all sink to the same undistinguishable level, before the august majesty of the Tsars.

Everywhere—even in England—pride may be seen occasionally draping itself in the mantle

of condescension, and haughtiness in the garb of humility. If the reader will take the trouble to tax his recollection, he will doubtless recall many exemplifications of this fact, more remarkable than the one which immediately recurs to the author's memory.

He remembers a certain ducal family, who gave a grand entertainment to all the tradespeople of the market-town adjoining their princely residence, to the utter scandal of the gentry of the county. Now, as the ducal family professed an extreme liberality of opinion, it was perfectly consistent in waving those distinctions of caste, which are quite anomalous with certain political tenets, and which, in the estimation of some, may even be little consonant with their religious convictions; and consequently, thus far the indignation of the gentry was misplaced and reprehensible. But in the next place the same Amphytrions issue a general invitation to the gentry of the country; and then, when the supper succeeds the ball, those who had given it, retire, with the party staying in the house, to sup in another room.

Now, after this assumption of a superiority which neither really existed nor was recognised, was it condescension or pride which made these people admit into their drawing-rooms those

whom the conventionalities of society had hitherto excluded from them?

It is in this spirit that the Imperial palaces are occasionally thrown open to all the Emperor's children.

In the present instance, thousands upon thousands were partaking of their Sovereign's hospitality to the roar of those innumerable fountains which have caused the gardens of Peterhoff to be designated "gardens of the many waters." All classes were represented in the motley assembly—the moujik, the trader, and the merchant, feeling secure from observation amongst the crowd of their fellows; and the noble, whose absence might be marked in some black list, being anxious to display his loyal attendance.

The Sovereign's invitation is universal, and unrestricted. Lazarus in his rags is not excluded from it; but then there are so many hundred police agents, avowed and disguised, who do not consider such a spectacle as fitting for an Emperor, that a selection is made; and neither the wan and hollow cheek nor the very sordid habiliment are admitted, should they present themselves. A good well-fed countenance and decent clothing, of however humble a class it may be distinctive, or whatever filth it may cover, are the real tickets of admission for the lower orders.

The Emperor's eyes must rest on none but happy-looking people; and, in truth, it would be difficult to see a more pleased or contented-looking crowd than greet the Imperial family with the thunder of their acclamations, when the signal is given—not before.

The fact itself is not to be denied, though how false the conclusions drawn by those who,—contrasting the condition of this people with a sullen assemblage of French or English operatives—would draw from this momentary appearance of contentment, any inferences in favour of the former.

Without inquiring how much of human happiness may arise from natural cheerfulness of temper, it is obvious to all who have seen much of men and things, that races are born with marked distinctions in the natural contentedness of their dispositions, just as individuals possess it in a greater or less degree in their respective races. The experience of the man who has never stirred beyond his village, may have shown him those, whom health, and wealth, and every prosperity have crowned, a prey to gloom and mental misery, whilst perhaps the unluckiest of cobblers sings over his scanty ill-paid work as merrily as the caged lark suspended from his stall.

The author has heard a hearty song from

the tenants of the bagnios, and beheld happy faces, as their owners kept time to the clank of their irons; and he has seen a devotee—not of the ascetic school, but one in the very act of labours of love and charity—look as miserable as the personification of the ills which he considered it his gentle mission to relieve. Cheerfulness does not therefore depend upon virtue. He has seen one of the most healthy of Athletæ, wear a face as unchangeable in its mournful rigidity as the mask of a sculptured Melpomenè; and he remembers once conversing with a merry, hungry beggar, who had just been turned out of an hospital, with an incurable cancer. "When you know life to be so short, why not pass through it gaily?" said he.

It is therefore neither wealth, nor health, nor virtue, nor competence, nor independence,—present or prospective,—which has anything to do with this tendency of the mind in individuals; and so it is with races, whilst both with races and individuals it is accidental as the colour of their hair and as little connected with the comfort or discomfort of their condition.

The Lazzaroni in their rags, and the negroes in the slave colonies on their holiday, present a picture of contented mirth, which you will

never see breaking forth from the prosperity of other people; for instance the English. Without alluding to a crowd of artisans or of labourers, with their many causes of complaint—thrown into such relief by the luxury and opulence which insult and surround them;—take any assemblage of the prosperous and wealthy, look into the faces of the members of the House of Commons, can you read the same contented merriment there as on the countenance of the Neapolitan beggar or the captive black? And this felicitous contentedness of disposition, the lower orders of Muscovites possess to solace them beneath their many burdens; but never believe, dear reader, however speciously it be argued by those who confound the "because" with the "notwithstanding," that they would look a whit less happy if as secure from the lash of a master and the rapacity and tyranny of the omnipresent police as the white population of a state of the Union.

As a superficial spectacle, however, one of these princely entertainments is highly interesting, though subject to a drawback, to which all classes of Russians have been long accustomed; but to which a stranger can never become wholly habituated—the insupportable odour of the crowd, exceeding that of a million of rabbit-

hutches—when the breeze mingles the perfume of sour bread, and semi-putrid cabbage, and rancid oil, with the abundant musk of the wealthier burghers, nobles, and *employés*, and wafts it across a space of many hundred feet—before you join the assembly whose proximity is so odoriferously heralded.

Horace had not been long in the garden before he descried his friend the poet, who was soon walking arm-in-arm with him. Of course he was followed by his chief admirer, the Lieutenant Alexius.

"Look," said the poet, "do you see that shooting star?"

"Nonsense! it is a rocket—one of the fireworks," said Horace.

"I tell you it was a shooting star—it was just above the paper-mills; there would be no rockets in that direction."

"Well, if it be a shooting star, it might suggest a poetical allusion, if it were seen flashing above a castle, or a ruin, or a dungeon, or even a palace; but a prosaic paper-mill!"

"A paper-mill may be prosaic; but even that very paper-mill might point a moral, if you knew its history; at least a Russian moral."

"How so?" said Horace. "Does any story attach to it?"

" Scarcely a story," replied the poet. " These mills were tenanted by an Anglo-German. The Emperor Alexander was determined to write on paper as fine as English made within his own dominions; and these paper-works were one of the great hobbies of his reign. He laid out—I am afraid to say how many million roubles on them, and their director, who was a relative, by the way, of Sir William C—'s, who has given his name to the rockets of his invention, stood high in his favour—so high, that, forgetting that man was mortal, he refused to allow a portion of the premises of the Imperial manufactory to be taken to enlarge and embellish the adjoining residence of the Grand Duke Nicholas. But Alexander died, and Nicholas became Emperor; the director had forgotten the offence he had given; but the Prince had not forgotten or forgiven it. The first act of his reign was to send a commission to inquire into the manufacturer's accounts; and, as there are no accounts in any public office or direction in the Empire, which will bear such determined scrutiny, he was declared a defaulter and expelled, ruined, and beggared.

" And the moral of all this?"

" Why the uncertain tenure of Imperial favour—a moral of which I should like to

see those who now monopolise it more persuaded."

The poet here suddenly started, and his brow contracted for a moment, as two ladies, on the arm of an officer, appeared at the end of an alley; but it was only momentary; and, apologizing to Horace, he went to join his wife, his brother-in-law, and his wife's sister; for such were the three personages.

"I," said the Lieutenant Alexius, "am most anxiously watching for the Obrasoffs. I trust they will be here."

"At least it was their intention an hour ago; for I dined with them."

"*You dined with them?* Tell me then," replied the Lieutenant eagerly, "was not the Duchess of Lowicz there?"

"The Duchess of Lowicz was there."

"Ah! how provoking," exclaimed the Lieutenant, "that I should not have seen them this morning!"

"And now tell me," said Horace, "who is this Duchess of Lowicz?"

But as the Lieutenant was about to reply, they perceived Madame Obrasoff and her daughters.

First of all, his companion entered into very earnest conversation with the former; and then

he appeared to be referred by her to Anna. Almost immediately, Anna appeared to listen and reply to Alexius with such eager interest that Horace, a little piqued, devoted all his attention to the fair mother; and he rendered it none the less marked because he thought that he read in their eyes a sort of rivalry betwixt the mother and daughter. Considering the attractions of the former, her real insensibility of heart, and the pains she took to please, he could not help thinking that the spirit of intrigue and the vanity of the mother must often have led her to neutralise the matrimonial schemes which she had formed for her daughter.

Now it happened that, amidst the light, the crowd, and the bustle, the little party were separated at every turn, and therefore they fixed upon a place of rendezvous to which they constantly returned. At first the appointment was duly kept; but at length Madame Obrasoff waited in vain with her cavalier for them nearly half an hour.

"Who has carried off my daughter?" she said to a passer by.

"I have just met them; turn to the right and you will overtake them. They are with the Princess Lowicz."

"With the Duchess? Oh it is all right. We shall see nothing of them for an hour; and, in fact, if we take this direction, I know her favourite haunt; and, at least, we shall be out of the glare, and heat, and crowd."

After a short walk, Horace and Madame Obrasoff sat down together; and, falling into her own vein of sentimental German mysticism, that of the Krudener school, with which the Emperor Alexander became so imbued, he took a malicious pleasure—as he thought of the passage which the poet had related of her history—in leading her, step by step, to commit herself, by pretending all those delicate refinements of sensibility which are incomprehensible—say those who pretend to them—to the grossness of natures less susceptible than their own.

The Count piqued himself in not being outdone in eloquence or pathos, as they proceeded deep into these dreamy abstractions; but though he was so perfectly aware that he was listening to an *actrice*, and an *actrice* who, unlike one professional was endeavouring to practise upon him a real deceit, instead of avowedly conjuring up an illusion to extort his admiration for her skill; still,—cognisant of the heartlessness which dictated them—he could

not help wondering at the involuntary effect of her words upon him.

And, as it not unfrequently happens, the visionary generalities which they discussed soon resulted in quite individual application. When on the subject of those magnetic, or sympathetic, or sympathetically magnetic influences, which involuntarily and at once attract the affections, and, sometimes with the rapidity of a single glance, determine through life, and, perhaps, through eternity, the fate of two beings; the lady—led on by the pretension which Horace significantly set forth "of being under the empire of one of those sudden, inexplicable, and overpowering fascinations of which he had often heard and doubted," and from somewhat of which it was perhaps true that only his knowledge of her secret preserved him—she avowed that she had felt singularly troubled ever since the first time that her eyes had met his, and that she had first heard the accents of his voice; because—although there was no resemblance of feature — so striking, startling, and painful was the likeness of expression to that of one long loved, unceasingly mourned, and unhappily departed, that she had hastened to her carriage and fainted there outright. In the full

belief of that mysterious sympathy, of the existence of which she had always entertained an intuitive conviction, and which his assurance confirmed so strangely—she had ventured to confide to him that, which he would too readily understand to misconceive her motive or abuse her confidence. To him, who protested that he had felt the same involuntary simultaneous interest, she was led to entrust, on so brief an acquaintance, what an age of intimacy would never have induced her to lay open to a nature less congenial; for how could any other understand or respect the recollection of an affection, which was at once a happiness, a remorse, an agony, and a terror—an affection of whose enduring memory nothing could ever usurp the place? Whilst at the same time it must account for the deep thrilling interest, and the unfeminine eagerness with which she sought to look into his eyes whose glance, and to listen to his words whose tone recalled in a startling and miraculous manner to her faithful and sensitive recollection those looks and sounds —the remembrance of which was the only solace to one for whom hope and happiness were buried."

A deep blush of indignation rose to Horace's brow, and he was about to ask,

"*In the grave, at the gallows' foot?* But he restrained the words upon his lips, and endeavouring to modulate his voice to the touching harmony of hers, he continued, as he seized the hand which trembled in the most natural manner in the world within his own,

"Oh, yes, I can fully understand the plenitude, the depth, the constancy, of such an affection! and how much indulgence there is in the hearts of men for love, even for that which they stigmatise as guilty love, when it is true to itself in death, and beyond death, like yours, gentle lady!—one may judge by the picture, which Dante, the orthodox Dante, has drawn in his Inferno of the daughter of Guido da Polenta, and the universal sympathy which the touching tale elicits—you remember it? Francesca de Rimini has been slain, with her lover, by the deformed and outraged husband, Malatesta; and, dying in their unrepented sin, they are doomed to the regions of the damned, where Dante sees them wandering, but *together!* —and where the soft Francesca's shade boasts of this happiness amidst her pain—

He, who from me shall never separate!

"So redeeming has the depth of love's devotion been held in its guilt, and so hallowing in its innocence—as in yours!"

Madame Obrasoff only withdrew her trembling hand, and Horace continued: "In Dante's picture—Lanciotto Malatesta no longer pursues them; he has wreaked his mad anger upon earth. It is true, that the case must have been reversed—to have made the husband's the pursuing shade; and, perhaps, if it had been instead an injured woman, the poet might have represented her as an avenging fury—in the person of a wife, *whom jealousy, or grief, or anger had maddened!*"

"Maddened!" said the lady, scarcely audibly, and at that moment a cloud suddenly clearing away from before the moon, its light penetrated into the sombre solitude—which the general illumination had made so rare a place of refuge—beaming with all the cold brightness of a frozen sun ray through the leaves, full on her face; and Horace was startled for a moment as he saw her hands clasped, and her humid eyes turned up to heaven.

But they heard voices and footsteps approaching, and by the same transient light Horace distinguished the Duchess of Lowicz in deep conversation with Alexius, and a little behind them, the two daughters of Madame Obrasoff. As the moon became again clouded, the mother made him a signal to let them pass in silence,

and when they had passed about a minute, she rose, and peremptorily insisting on following them, pursued the same path in silence, her arm in the Count's, and hurrying him on at a rapid pace. They were soon again in the glare and crowd of the illuminated walks.

As this artificial light shone upon her countenance, Horace saw that all traces of her no less artificial emotion had vanished, and its expression was of the same placid winning gentleness as usual, as the variegated lamps appeared reflected from those peculiar opal-like eyes, which seemed without a colour of their own.

Here, at the place of rendezvous, — whilst she was occupied in the interchange of friendly words and kindly congratulations with a party who were pre-occupying it for the same purpose—Horace took his leave. He had not rambled far, when, suddenly, the crowd, which he was seeking to avoid, ebbed away: the fireworks were beginning —a rocket or two had given the signal that the antagonistic element was now to be allowed to play in sheets, cascades, and streams, and all the innumerable devices of the artificer—as if in emulation of the water, whose reign had hitherto been triumphant, as thousands of fountains scattered it about in glittering dew.

At this moment, with a very hasty step, two

persons hurried past him. A man in uniform,— for almost every one who, in England, wears anything but a smock-frock, appears in Russia in uniform, or in professional black — seemed dragging along a female figure; and in her Horace again recognised the Duchess of Lowicz. But she gave him no opportunity of bowing, as she looked resolutely straight before her, although her cavalier paused for an instant as he passed Horace, and, scowling at him under a pair of bushy eyebrows, gave a sort of growl like a bear; and then again, with a rude jerk, hurried on the Duchess.

Horace smiled. "No doubt the husband!"

"Poor husband! frown not on me," and then he added to himself, "What marvel! for who ever saw a better illustration of Beauty and the Beast."

But before this couple had proceeded five paces, the Duchess dropped a note upon the gravel-walk. There were other persons approaching, and so Horace — having dexterously placed his foot upon it—picked it up.

"Bravo!" said Horace, "talk of Venice the joyous in its carnival!—this is the place for intrigues."

The seal of the note was unbroken, but it was directed to Mme. de L, destroying the illusion,

which for an instant had taken possession of his mind, that it might be addressed to himself.

"At least, Madam, you have fallen into discreet hands; and if I deliver it to any person but yourself, it shall be to the young Lieutenant, not to the bashaw-looking husband."

"It is very singular," he thought, "that, in a place so scandalous as Petersburg, I can hear nothing about this Duchess of Lowicz; but there is Isaakoff, he will not blink the question."

"My dear Isaakoff! you must solve a riddle for me; for I cannot get a straightforward answer from any one."

"I hope you are not going to ask me any more questions about conspirators or politics."

"Oh, no; it is on the subject of a lady—"

"Ah! a lady, indeed, on this head any truth may be told; or, indeed, any untruth repeated."

"Who, and what—I want to know—is the Duchess of Lowicz?"

"Now, in the name of common sense, was there ever such a mania for fishing in troubled waters!—The Duchess of Lowicz, is the Duchess of Lowicz."

"Thank you for your information; she is handsome and amiable, and I suppose wealthy; and she has a husband with an aspect stern

enough for a door-knocker; but who was she?"

"Little more than a Polish peasant girl."

"And the rank and wealth of her husband bought her?"

"No, he paid a price besides—a crown."

"A crown-piece? You are jesting."

"No, the imperial Crown of all the Russias."

"What? Her husband is—"

"The Grand Duke Constantine, who, to marry Janna Grudzinska, sacrificed his claim to the autocratic throne. Now, let the subject drop;—but, curse your inquisitiveness! what, have you been meddling with the Princess Lowicz? Look! do you see that fellow coming up to us, I know him well, he is an agent of the secret police. God only grant that I do not get mixed up in it!"

Our old acquaintance, Baron Bamberg, here stepped up to them, and held out a hand, which the Prince shook with a fervour which was intended to conceal a momentary expression of disgust.

"Will you present me to your friend?"

"Oh yes," said the Prince, eagerly. "Count Horace de Montressan, Baron de Bamberg."

The Count drew himself up stiffly and con-

temptuously, and looked the new comer full in the face, whilst the Prince, retiring with indecent haste, said:

"Excuse my leaving you an instant together."

Horace turned on his heel. When the stranger seized him by the button-hole, he clinched his fist and was about to put in practice one of Sir Thomas Blunt's lessons, by knocking him down; but he was thus addressed:

"Pardon me, Sir, you have picked up a note belonging to me."

"To you?—It is false."

"False!" said the Baron, fiercely. "Do you know whom you are speaking to?"

"By profession if not by name," answered Horace.

"Well then," said the Baron, "as an *employé* of the Imperial High Police, since you know it, I demand that note which you picked up."

"I will not give it you," said Horace, resolutely.

"You refuse?"

"I refuse."

"Then follow me this instant to the Grand Master. You had better, or a sign will procure assistance."

"Let us go then."

They walked on side by side; but Horace

perceived a third person following at their heels, probably to give aid in case of his attempting to escape or to pick up anything he might throw down.

The Grand Master, whom Horace had met that morning, was seated in an apartment of an adjacent pavilion. The Baron Bamberg went in first; and then Horace was introduced alone. There was an officer of the gendarmerie in his sky-blue and white uniform, who quitted the room on a signal from his chief; and before the grand master were pens, ink, sealing wax, paper, envelopes and a lighted taper, all hastily drawn from a portable apparatus.

"Ah!" said Count Benkendorf, blandly extending his hand, "do we meet again?"

"It appears so," said Horace; "but I—"

"Well, Count de Montressan, you bear an older head than I should have imagined on such young shoulders; and I compliment you on your discretion in not giving up a note dropped by a lady into any but proper hands. How could you know that it was a matter of the utmost indifference? But as it is, my discreet young friend, the Duchess—knowing how easily scandal attaches to one in her station—has requested me to ask you for it, to remit it direct to her husband, whom it principally concerns,

as she saw at a first glance, which prevented her from reading further."

The manner of the Grand Master was so frank and urbane, that perhaps Horace might have been deceived, had not the powerful official betrayed himself by saying that the Duchess *had* opened the note, the seal of which, Horace knew to be unbroken; so after a moment's hesitation, he replied:

"You are pleased to rate my discretion perhaps more highly than it deserves; but at least it extends thus far, that if the Duchess had dropped a note and I had picked it up, I should never have dreamed of giving any but the most respectful interpretation to an incident so common-place; but I think that, before either praising or calling in question this quality in me, it would have been as well to ascertain whether I ever had picked up a note at all."

"You do not, Monsieur le Comte, meet me in an equable spirit of frankness," said the Grand Master, slightly knitting his brows. "*The fact is ascertained* though you dexterously put your foot upon the letter."

"Well," answered Horace, "if it be so,—and I never denied, I only called on you to substantiate it,—what then?"

"Simply," said the Grand Master, "that

the Duchess desires me to ask you for her note."

"What?" replied Horace, "give up a note I had found to any but the person who dropped it? Though pray observe that I have never acknowledged picking up anything of the kind."

"You forget, perhaps, young man, the nature of my office. If the wife of a lavoshnik (shop-keeper) had dropped her gilt ear-ring, it is my duty to demand it; nay, farthermore, I should punish any finder who did not bring it to the police-office; and you pick up a written document, which, for aught you know, may be a precious one; for, as you have not read it, how can you be sure of its insignificance? And which you have seen dropped by an august personage. You dare tamper with me about it?"

"If I have such a paper, I am willing to deliver it into the hands of the person who dropped it."

"Perhaps you would wish for an autograph requisition to that effect from the Duchess?" said the Grand Master, ironically.

"No," said Horace coolly, "that would be of no use; for I do not know her hand-writing."

"What!" thundered the Grand Master,

"would you wish the wife of the Grand Duke to demand it of you in person?"

"If I had it, to none other would I give it up."

"Harkye," said Count Benkendorf, who was losing all patience, "do you know that I have the power, by raising my little finger, of causing you to be searched? Do you know that I have the power to strip your flesh of its very skin if requisite to seek beneath it? Do you know that I have the power of making you rot in a dungeon?"

"I am a subject of the King of France," said Horace.

"And do you forget," continued Count Benkendorf, "that France, like every other country, acknowledges our right to enforce our own laws; and that the detention you are practising is a felony?"

"I do not know," answered Horace, "what may or what may not be your power; but this I know, that, for me as a gentleman, there is a law of honour and of chivalry, which no authority, however despotic, will ever cause me willingly to violate; and, just on account of the threat you have held out, I must crave your indulgence for a step which will place the matter beyond dispute;" and Horace, taking the note

from his pocket, lighted it at the burning taper.

Count Benkendorf called out aloud, at the same time endeavouring to snatch the burning paper from his hand; but Horace held it resolutely and successfully at the full length of his young and vigorous right arm, so resolutely that the flame scorched his fingers to the quick, and caused him to extinguish it by crushing the remnant in his hand; and then, as the officer of gendarmerie hastened to the Grand Master's assistance, with considerable presence of mind he swallowed the small darkened remaining fragment.

"Call for a stomach-pump!" said the Grand Master furiously; and then, as Horace looked very coolly and contemptuously at the sword which the officer of gendarmerie had drawn, his interrogator continued more calmly: "No, stay; the fragment was too small. Now, headstrong youth, you have sealed your ruin, unless you are willing to repair the mischief you have done."

"Now," said Horace, a little elated with his determination, as men are apt to be when they have made up their minds to brave the worst, and have acted up to the dictates of their enthusiasm, "now, that question settled, I am willing to do anything to oblige you."

"Not to oblige me, but to save yourself, young man," repeated Count Benkendorf, with a sinister expression of countenance. "Did you see that note given?"

"After what has passed between us," said Horace, "do you think that I, the Count of Montressan, am likely to play the part of a spy?"

The Grand Master reflected for an instant, and then whispering to the officer of gendarmerie, he said aloud:

"You must follow me into the presence of the Grand Duke."

CHAPTER XI.

HORACE, together with Count Benkendorf and the officer of Gendarmerie stepped into a carriage, which, with six horses abreast, rattled rapidly along the high road, till it stopped at the palace of Strelna, just opposite to the post-house, where Blanche and Mattheus had paused three days before on their road to St. Petersburg.

It was evident that the Grand Master of the secret police was vexed at being thus baffled; for he made only this menacing observation:

"You are now going into the Grand Duke's presence; and on your own head be whatever happens."

The domestics of this palace were all grey-headed soldiers, prim, and buckled up to the last degree of military stiffness. They were led

by an aide-de-camp, who moved stealthily and noiselessly as a cat through a long suite of apartments, the walls of which were as closely hung as a picture-gallery with paintings, but all small military paintings, chiefly representing the soldiers of different regiments in their most rigidly professional attitudes. At length they reached a room, in which Generals Rhoda and Le Gendre seemed to be keeping watch; the former was the chief of the staff, the latter was a cavalry general. Dismissed from the Russian army on account of his inordinate rapacity, which probably ruined him, by causing him to deny his superiors a share in his spoliations, he had taken refuge under the wing of the Grand Duke Constantine. There was nothing forbidding about his countenance, on which even appeared a substratum of good nature, had not the formation of his fleshy mouth and jaws indicated, in unequivocal lines, habitual sensuality and the predominance of all the animal appetites.

And his physiognomy did not belie his nature. Without a grain of malice in his composition, to lead him to do harm for harm's sake, whenever these appetites, or his insatiable love of play, instigated him; there was nothing to which he would not descend or to

which he would not apply his natural cunning.

So—although formerly known for a mere jolly companion when the Grand Duke employed him in the secret police of the kingdom of Poland, of which he was viceroy—he had become one of the most unscrupulous and dreaded agents of an institution, which proved so terrible a curse to thousands, and which, in Poland, as in Russia, can only be compared for its power and cruelty to the old inquisition of Spain.

"Stop," whispered both these worthies in a breath to the Grand Master, pointing significantly to an inner room, one of the folding doors of which, was half open.

"What! can I not go in?" said Count Benkendorf.

"Not now; the fit is upon him."

"Indeed!" replied the Grand Master with an involuntary expression of awe; and, suddenly drawing himself up, he seemed to hesitate for a few minutes, during which no one interrupted the silence.

At length, a deep rough voice broke out upon it from the inner room, thundering out the question: "Who is there?"

It was the Grand Duke: his quick ears had caught the jingle of the spurs of the police-master, who, judging from this interrogation that

the fit of insane animal ferocity, to which he knew that Constantine was subject, and under which he imagined him to be labouring, had given way, at least to some glimmering of reason, was now emboldened—by the mighty power of his office, which gave him full authority in the absence of the Emperor even over the Imperial family—to intrude upon him, when even his two favourites dared not approach. He entered the apartment. After an interval, they were heard in a conversation scarcely audible, except for a storm of guard-house oaths and expletives, which every now and then the Grand Duke thundered out.

"Thank God!" said Le Gendre, evidently much relieved, "the fit has passed away."

"Perhaps," replied Rhoda doubtfully, in the lowest of whispers.

At length the Grand Duke's voice was heard, as he concluded a burst of boisterous indignation by, "I have defiled his mother! I have defiled his mother!—bring him in."

The police director opened the folding door, and beckoned quietly with his finger to Horace, who endeavoured, by a firm step and an assured countenance, to conceal and perhaps repel the rising thoughts of Siberia, and dungeons, and perpetual imprisonment and mines. The doors closed after him, and he stood in the

presence of the Grand Duke. But the fit was not over. Count Benkendorf put his finger to his lip, and, seizing Horace by the arm with his left hand, as if to prevent his moving another step, they both remained silent and motionless.

Constantine, who had torn open his uniform, was seated on a divan; his hair and garments were in utter disarray, and the upper part of his body seemed to double over the lower, as he rocked it to and fro with a see-saw motion. His eyes were red and bloodshot, and glared from under his shaggy eye-brows with all the ferocity of those of an infuriated animal; his lips quivered and worked, while the foam frothed over them; and there broke from him a low moan, which sometimes subsided into a plaintive intonation and then rose to a howl, which it was terrible to hear from a human being.

After a few minutes, this nervous agony or excitement seemed to subside; and, making a sign to them to remain, he swore an oath or two, and then followed another howl as he rocked to and fro; and then an oath until a full and uninterrupted volley showed his restoration to his habitual reason.

"This is the French Count," said the Grand Master, as if anxious to arrest his attention.

Hereupon Constantine rose; and Horace, who had scarcely noticed him in the gardens, had an opportunity of surveying his figure. His make and stature were tall and commanding; for incessant drill had modified its natural burliness; but there was a peculiar stoop and forward projection of his bull-neck, which gave him an appearance of deformity. His face was not ignoble, although his forehead was low; but it was knitted by a scowl, which was far from prepossessing; and his bloodshot eyes rolled just like those of an angry boar, as they twinkled through the overhanging grey and bushy eyebrows, which were bristled up and staring.

"Oh this is the Frenchman!" said the Grand Duke, clenching his fist and approaching with a step like that of an elephant.

"Now," whispered the Grand Master to Horace, "beware! answer frankly, promptly, and submissively."

"Your rank, name, and regiment?" asked the Grand Duke angrily and abruptly; and then, recalling his wandering thoughts, he added: "Oh! I remember! you are the man who have dared to refuse a note, which you picked up, when asked for it in my name?" Speak!" thundered the Grand Duke; "how dared you?"

"In truth," replied Horace, "if your Imperial Highness had let it fall, I should have been the first to restore it."

"What? He answers me!—he argues with me!—he gives me reasons, forsooth! Where is that letter?"

"Burnt," said the Grand Master; "he destroyed it in my presence."

"He dared!" exclaimed Constantine.

"I would now suggest to your Imperial Highness that, the mischief being done, he should repair it as best he can. From the moment your Imperial Highness called my attention to the matter, he has been watched; those who saw him pick up the paper know that he never read it; but there is every reason to believe that he could give us the antecedent information we require as to who delivered it, though," added the Grand Master warily, to remove all his scruples, "it is as well to inform him you had perused its contents."

"I!" said the Grand Duke; "that is an outrageous lie. I never saw the outside of it, much less the contents."

The Count Benkendorf shrugged his shoulders.

"But, look you, things are come to such a pass, that there are people who, reckoning on

feminine ignorance and sensibility, step at every turn betwixt me and the culprit, and stay the sword of military and civil justice—traitors seeking to relax the bonds of military discipline and civil order—to turn the guard-houses into bear-gardens, and my soldiers into slovenly logicians and philosophers. Whenever I am about to make an example, these busy-bodies set her to interfere: I shall soon not be able to punish a soldier, degrade a negligent officer, or send a disaffected dog to the mines, without a domestic scene; and of those meddlers themselves—I have defiled their mothers!—I will make a terrible example. Who are they, Benkendorf? I have defiled thy mother! Why dost thou not speak? It is thy business to know!"

"I have brought your Imperial Highness one who can speak," said the Grand Master, pointing to Horace.

"Yes," continued Constantine, "*she* has been tampered with. I degraded two of my people; and yesterday, forsooth, the one turned dogged and the other insolent. Why shouldn't they when so sure of an intercessor? Now, to-night, she spoke to me of them; and *some one* prompted her. Who was it, Benkendorf? or are you yourself in league with them? But all

shall not avail, if you all band together. I had ordered them five hundred lashes apiece, and now they shall share five thousand between them, and begin the tale at sun-rise to-morrow. So much for interference—and now let me see if I cannot do something for those who set her on to speak. Who they are I will know."

Count Benkendorf, with a low bow, again pointed to Horace.

"You, Sir, speak out. What do you know? Who dropped that note? Where did you pick it up? Who gave it to her?"

As the angry observations made by Constantine had been in Russ, which, spoken with some vehemence and volubility was wholly unintelligible to Horace, he was still under the impression that all the wrath of his interrogator was caused by his doubts of his wife's fidelity. But whilst he mentally cursed all the intrigues of these Russian and Polish women, he turned over his position in his own mind, and resolved, whatever the fate in which a refusal would involve him, that his pride of family station and of nationality, to say nothing of the interest which she inspired, forbade his giving her up, —happen what might—so he replied:

"Is your Imperial Highness, whose rank I so profoundly respect, so ignorant of mine, as not

to know that I, the Count de Montressan; —owing my allegiance to the King of France, and being responsible to my family and myself for maintaining its honour;—that I cannot, without disgracing myself, give any evidence in such a matter, if I had any to give; or, that it would be a worthy part to feed the jealousy of a husband, or to turn spy on an illustrious Lady? I pray your Highness to consider my respectful refusal—notwithstanding the painful situation in which I am placed, as final, absolute, and irrevocable."

"A jealous husband!" exclaimed Constantine in astonishment. "What does he mean? Speak, scoundrel!" And he twisted his hand furiously into Horace's neckcloth, whereat the latter losing all his self-possession, pushed the Grand Duke so suddenly and forcibly from him, that he staggered back one pace, whilst Horace, by receding another, augmented the distance between them.

"This," exclaimed Horace, doubling his fist, which smarted with the pain of the burn, "is infamous treatment! I have kept within the bounds of the respect I owe; but, be it at the peril of any man breathing to lay a hand upon me whilst my arms are free!" And, in his desperation, he so evidently looked around for

some weapon, that the Grand Duke perceived it; and, just as the police-master was making a signal, he desired him by an impatient gesture to desist.

"You were looking for a sword!" exclaimed the Grand Duke, less in wrath than amazement. "In God's name what to do?"

"To pay back blow for blow, and blood for blood!" said Horace, who had grown quite reckless.

"And you refuse to answer me!"

"If the earth yawned at my feet."

"If so," said the Grand Duke, cooling suddenly, and speaking to himself aloud; "he is a sort of Tcherkess, there is no forcing such natures." And then, with all the fickleness of his father Paul, he began to survey him attentively and without anger, till his features gradually relaxed into a positively benevolent smile of approbation.

"Do you know, Benkendorf," he observed in Russ; "that a fellow like that is a true man after all!" And then he said to Horace in French, "What height are you?—Five feet eleven?"

"Your Highness is free to jest, so you do not touch me."

"Jest! gad's death, I am very serious; but what is the matter with your hand?"

"A just consequence of his obstinacy in holding the burning letter till it was consumed," said the grand master in Russ.

"Obstinacy! only hear, you call firmness obstinacy; you would (I have defiled your mothers) call that Roman—the man of the statue-makers, what was his name? Mutus Scævola—obstinate? Now, I say that it is very fine. A man who will do that, has got a heart in his body.

"Come," said the Grand Duke, with a cordiality so frank and natural, that even the deep irritation of Horace gave way. "I forgot what I owed both to you and to myself; I was too hasty. As to the disorder of your cravat, you are not in uniform, and look at my condition, it is more scandalously disarranged.

Still it was a little suspiciously that Horace allowed the Duke to press his hand.

"You don't bear malice, do you?"

"I am only glad, no longer innocently to offend your Highness."

"But that burn is an ugly one. Here Benkendorf let them call some of my doctors."

"No, I thank your Highness; I will wrap

it in the cotton of my cloak wadding, and if permitted, will hasten back to Petersburg."

"Permitted! I will permit you in my own carriage, with my best horses; you shall be driven like the wind; as for the cotton, here, let us cut some out of the lining of Benkendorf's cloak." And the impetuosity of Constantine was only restrained by the want of some incisive instrument from making an immediate attack on the grand-master's garment.

"Good bye!" said the Grand Duke, whose eyes, peering beneath his now upraised shaggy brows, had assumed an expression of sagacious kindliness, not unlike that of the water-spaniel or poodle; "remember, that you have a friend in Constantine."

Horace bowed profoundly and was retiring.

"Stop!" exclaimed the Grand Duke, recalling him, as the door closed; and observing to himself enthusiastically, "He is six feet! six feet, within the eighth of a veshok, I will wager, and has the carriage of a soldier!"

"Your Imperial Highness was pleased to recall me."

"You have no idea of taking service?"

"None whatever," said Horace.

"Oh, very well! we bear no malice to each other?"

"Nothing but respectful devotion."

"Good bye."

They had not closed the folding-doors, when Benkendorf and Rhoda were called.

Constantine gave his directions to Rhoda, and then he said to Berkendorf, "Mark me; I will not allow of any molestation whatever."

"Your Imperial Highness will allow me to observe, that his conduct was outrageously intemperate."

"That is my affair."

"And then to speak plainly, he is a Frenchman—who knows the colour and interpretation he may put on this affair, or what stigma he may affix upon an august name? The wife of Cæsar should not be suspected; and he may think . . . . In a word, he even ought to be at least frightened into discretion."

"I tell you, no! no! no!—there is more discretion in that youth than in all of you. I have defiled your mothers!—now, go—anything that is done to annoy him I shall consider done to myself."

In a few minutes, Benkendorf joined him: his aspect was stern, his tone of voice severe.

"Hark ye! Count de Montressan, you have seen and heard things to-day, which it were well for you entirely to forget; but if you should

remember one tittle of them, at least, recal what I now tell you—I, to whom you owe, perhaps, your liberty—that it would be better for you to cut out your tongue than use it indiscreetly. Now, will you give me your word of honour, that nothing of this matter shall ever pass your lips?"

"Never, upon my honour! and I think I have given proof of my discretion."

"Then, go!" said the grand master, "the carriage of his gracious Highness waits to convey you to the city."

The next morning, when Horace awoke from a refreshing sleep, a small parcel was delivered to him.

It contained, detached from its chain, the emerald which he had seen on the arm of the Princess of Lowicz, and it was accompanied by these words,

"Sir, you have saved two lives! Do not forget that she, who is indebted to you for them, will not prove ungrateful, if ever it be in her power to serve you.

"J. L."

"An episode for a novel in three volumes, and a truly pleasant termination!" exclaimed

the Count; "if it were not for my burnt fingers. I suppose she means her own life, and that of the Lieutenant. Poor Grand Duke! but what else was to be expected from such an ill-assorted union!"

But it is not fitting that the reader should remain, perchance, under the same impression as Horace respecting that illustrious lady, whose exalted station, and whose unhappy decease have made her virtues—interrupted only by the grave—matter of history, and, as matter of history, the property of the novelist, so that he approach with due respect those manes, and handle tenderly that gentle memory.

The Duchess of Lowicz loved, indeed, she loved with all the devotion of an undivided affection in a woman's bosom; she loved her husband, the Grand Duke Constantine, the capricious, sullen, cruel compound of the bear and boar, the moody sanguinary tyrant, whose name was a terror in the mouths of men, and whom, on account of the animal ferocity of his brutal instincts, even those who did not tremble in his dependence, approached at times with trepidation. Constantine, who was daily dooming men to exile, or to perish by the knout or lash, almost without a shadow of a cause; Constantine, who had immolated victims with his own hand,

and who, in savage pastime had shot a female slave in his gardens; this man, or monster, was the only object of the beautiful and kind-hearted Duchess's love. Through life until his death, she seemed attached to him like a good angel to the path of a malevolent being, effacing or soothing by her beneficent influence the terrors and the traces of its fatal passage.

There is no praise too exalted for the good she did and the evil she prevented—as she watched with tender solicitude to save all the world from him, and to save from all the world her rude Constantine.

But how, it will be asked, could a creature so good, and amiable, and sensitive—even admitting all the attractive force of contrast—love a man so fearful?

This is one of those mysteries of the female heart, which, in life, daily present to our observation effects the causes of which remain perpetually insoluble to our comprehension. Was it not unspeakably flattering to a woman, to see this terrible and unimpressible nature, which resisted so obdurately all softening influences, so utterly subdued and conquered by his love for her—to see—like Una's lamb-like lion—the untameable and ravening beast crouch at her feet, and lick them—to see the eyes

gleaming with their sombre and self-destroying fury, subside from these paroxysms into glances of affection, as their rough lids filled with tears, and the lips, foaming with the agony of his rage, mutter their blessing as he covered her fair hands with kisses!

And then, was it strange that she should make all the allowances for hereditary predisposition, which her indulgence might suggest, in favour of the man, who had twice given up the highest position upon earth for her; not the vain questionable honours of a constitutional throne, with their daily petty annoyances; but the absolute Imperial throne of Russia, with sixty millions, not of subjects, but of slaves?

When Constantine first became enamoured of Janna Grudzinska, the daughter of one of those petty Polish gentlemen, who never really rose above the condition of the smallest farmer, and whom the present Emperor has banished again to the ranks of plebeianism; Constantine, to obtain the consent of his brother Alexander to his marriage with her, agreed to sacrifice his birthright to the throne. It has been said that she was originally ambitious; but she was soon cured of that ambition. She saw how closely her Constantine resembled his father Paul. There was the same reckless generosity, the

same occasional appreciation of what was noble, the same fitful benevolence; he was the true inheritor of Paul's eccentric virtues—Paul, who as all the world knows, arose one morning, and —judging that, since the quarrels of nations originated from the ambition or the machinations of princes and their ministers, it was unjust to shed their subjects' blood, or waste their treasure in the prosecution of their wars,—forthwith proposed to the hostile sovereigns of Europe, that they and their respective premiers should meet him and his minister in single combat; Paul, who, struck with the admiration for Napoleon's genius, changed his policy in a night, in the spirit of what Carlyle calls hero-worship; Paul, who, when he could be brought to see that he had punished, unadvisedly, acknowledged his error, with almost ostentatious humility, and endeavoured magnificently to repair the injury.

In short, all the noble qualities of Paul, which insanity often distorted into ridicule, were abundantly reproduced in Constantine, and in this he alone bore a characteristic likeness to him. For, if Alexander himself injured no one, he fled from the importunity of those whom he had allowed to be injured, and to whose suffering no mental offuscation blinded him. Nicholas, in the cold, unrelenting, almost passionless

cruelty of his persecution, seems to increase in obduracy as he continues it, — as if he paid back by augmenting hate the hatred which his treatment must inspire in those who suffer,— and who has never once acknowledged himself in error in all his multitudinous inflictions whether it be that, measuring as it has been just suggested, his hatred by that of his victims, he judges, that the more unjustly they have been punished, the more vividly this treasonable feeling must rise up in their inmost hearts; or, that he considers it more fitting that the guiltless should suffer, than that he should be convicted in men's estimation of having ever erred.

It is true that, like Paul, Constantine was a monster — not the cold, calculating, crafty monster of Louis XI's stamp, whose crimes, deliberate atrocities, were coldly and consciously committed; but of the school of outrageous tyrants of the Nero and Caligula stamp; men, whom in private, a British jury absolves from the last responsibility of their crimes, and locks up in the wards of Bedlam.

And was it not natural, that his wife's affection should refer all the hideous side of the Grand Duke's character to hereditary

insanity, whilst she looked at the virtues which it obscured as all his own?

But as she endured the long protracted agony of seeing, one by one, all the violences which she could not prevent his committing,—besides being cognisant of those premeditated, which she dissuaded him from perpetrating,—she soon turned all her efforts to deter him from aspiring to the purple; in which she knew that the imperative law of self-preservation would soon lead his subjects to strangle him like his father Paul.

She felt that there was none but herself in the wide world to love, perhaps to save, him; and she dreaded that, if armed with the unlimited and destroying power of Imperial sovereignty,—where a single command the breath of passion may have such a terrible and extended action,—she should no longer be able to step in as a sweet mediatrix between the millions whom she pitied, and him whom she trembled for, and loved, and pitied.

For, although, Constantine had renounced his claims to the Empire, his sombre spirit, now questioning his brother's right to impose such a condition on his marriage, and now persuaded by his wife to doubt his fitness to reign, was in a state of dangerous fermentation, and as, before the sudden death of Alexander,

the political atmosphere was rife with rumours of plots, conspiracies, and secret societies, which, in reality, had undermined society beneath the feet of Nicholas—that cautious Prince dreaded, that, if he accepted his elder brother's resignation of the crown and assumed it himself, a change in Constantine's capricious and uncertain mind might involve him and his family in utter ruin; and, therefore, the moment Alexander's death was known, he sent and hailed his brother, Cæsar!

The fretful spirit of Constantine, who, Esau-like, had been long brooding over his resignation, was sorely tempted; and then the Duchess of Lowicz put forth all her influence to induce him to renounce a second time the Imperial throne. After a long and terrible struggle with himself, he again sacrificed it to her—he sacrificed it not as a thing in perspective—not in the impatience of ungratified passion, but real, present, tangible, and only to the tears of his tender wife.

Now it happened that the two degraded officers who were the next morning to suffer, had found no means of appealing to the Duchess, until the Lieutenant Alexius, on the evening of the *fête* of Peterhoff had succeeded in securing her intercession; and he had commenced by giving her the case in writing, in the event of their being interrupted before he could explain

the full particulars. This was the note which Horace had picked up.

As the Duchess anticipated, the short space of time allowed, obliged her to interfere too suddenly, and without sufficient preparation to enable her to succeed. If the document in question had fallen into the hands of the Grand Duke, their doom would have been irremissibly sealed; as it was, the Duchess, who had overheard all that had passed between her husband and Count Horace, and was all the time in the adjoining room upon her knees in prayer, resolved, with desperate resolution, to profit by the returning sunshine of his temper; but alas! the only effect of her generous intercession appeared to be to evoke again the tempest, which was lulling into a calm.

"The fit" returned in all its fury: the window was thrown open; and the Grand Duke was left alone—with her.

After a time, according to her wont, she took his head upon her lap; for she only had the power somewhat to soothe him in these moments, when he was unapproachable to all the world but her; and thus the night passed; and after the night the first hours of morning.

* * * *

It will be asked, how was Constantine allowed,

in Russia, away from his own government, to exercise such terrible and gratuitous severities?

Let the reader imagine it to be an hour past midnight. The Grand Master of the secret police has regained his dwelling, and a highly influential petitioner is waiting for his return. Count Benkendorf answers him:

"It is impossible! I have just left the Grand Duke. He is furious!"

"But he has ordered them five thousand lashes! It is a certain death—the most cruel death!"

"Death three times told; but what is to be done?"

"And all for nothing!"

"Most likely, when the Grand Duke orders the punishment."

"But is it not terrible? It is all very well to send such a King Stork to those turbulent Poles; but I cannot understand that he should be allowed to go on so here. What says the Emperor?"

"What would you have him say? His brother has given up enough not to be thwarted in his humour in such trifles."

"Well, there is then nothing to be done?"

"Nothing."

"Adieu then. I shall not go home. I have

left five women inclusive of my own in tears in my wife's boudoir. I shall go and see if it is too late to sup at La Sapphira's."

"Ah! I would accompany you if I were not so sleepy. Good night."

* * * *

Just at the hour when Horace was half through his slumbers, and having got his head between two pillows, turned restlessly round as he dreamed himself at the dinner table of the Obrasoffs, where, bursting through the ceiling, the Lieutenant R . . . . with the rope still round his neck, and the cap drawn over his face, fell on his feet between Madame Obrasoff and Horace, and began to inquire superciliously of the latter, "how he dared to personate him by assuming so closely his face and manner." Just as Horace on turning relapsed into profound oblivion from this inconsistent and fantastic dream, the chill breeze of morning blew through the open window into an apartment of the Palace of Strelna, which presented a very different scene.

Constantine, long since exhausted, had fallen into a sweet sleep, his head reclining on the lap of the Duchess of Lowicz, who was still watching, pale, cold, and statue-like, but yet unwearying in her gentle vigil. At length his eyes opened slowly; he grasped her hand, it was cold as

marble; and when she attempted to speak, her teeth chattered, so chilled was she with the night air; and she coughed a hollow cough. He addressed her affectionately:

"You are not well, my soul. You have not slept; you were watching me."

"I should not otherwise have slept, thinking of those poor men who are to suffer."

"You must do something."

"How can I think of myself when my fellow beings are about to endure such pain?"

"What can *I* do?" asked the Grand Duke gloomily.

"Pardon them," said the Duchess, clasping her cold hands together.

A cloud passed over Constantine's brow; and then he said: "So be it!" and, impetuous in everything, he almost upset the exhausted Duchess as he rose and rushed to the door. "Here, Rhoda!"

Rhoda started from the sleep into which he had fallen,—booted and spurred as he was, and without having even ungirded his sword;—and hastily passing his hand down the front of his uniform to ascertain that every hook and button was in its place, as he answered, stood up in a precise military position, erect as an arrow, and letting his hands fall to his sides, against which he pressed the palms slightly, turning

the thumbs outwards as the regulation prescribed.

"Rhoda! see to it. I suspend the sentence of those two men who were to run the gauntlet."

CHAPTER XII.

JOHANN SAUER was half-brother to Dietrich Susse. They had both of late years contrived to ingratiate themselves so completely with the late Prince Isaakoff, that Dietrich had become by degrees the factotum of his master's property in St. Petersburg and Moscow; and Johann had been entrusted with the stewardship of the estate of Bialoe Darevnia, with its ten thousand peasants, in the government of Kalouga.

In figure and features there was considerable resemblance between the two relatives; and both had succeeded in supplanting their predecessors.

But in the character they assumed and in their *modus operandi* they utterly differed. Dietrich, by an assumption of honest simplicity and unbounded philanthropy,—which was the result of so low a cunning that it was transparent to every one but the old Prince himself—

had won his way to his master's unlimited confidence.

Johann Sauer, on the contrary, affected the genius and the man of science; and the Prince had died in the belief that he was patronising one of the great men of his century—a sort of compound between Newton, Leibnitz, and James Watt.

If, gentle reader, you have ever taken up your abode in any small town or village of northern or central Germany, you can no more fail to have met with such a character as the steward of the Bialoe Darevnia, than with a church and steeple.

Consult for a moment your scattered recollections, and they will surely remind you of some foolish pedant, with a little ill-digested reading and about enough mechanical knowledge to put together a Dutch clock, who modestly styles himself *mechanicus* and *philosophus*, and is evidently self-satisfied that he has monopolised all human knowledge, wisdom, and talent.

Johann Sauer was the type of that thoughtful and cloudy genus, so prevalent in Germany, where every man is said to think ten times more than an Englishman, and twenty times more than a Frenchman—a fact which there is no denying, though it be so slowly and in general

to so very little purpose. A disposition of mind too, which is characterised by an obstinate conceit, naturally in the inverse ratio of the thinker's power and lucidity of intellect, which leads him to imagine, when he has slowly disentangled a complete idea from the oceans of words, in which the talent of his countrymen obscures and buries it, that its value is to be rated by the trouble which it has cost him to disinter and master it, in addition to which, he is almost sure either seriously to appropriate its originality, or at least to set forth arrogant pretensions thereunto.

Thus the philosophical systems of the Greeks, those intellectual demi-gods who seem nearly to have exhausted the wide range of metaphysical speculation, have been taken up by the philosophers of Germany, and diluted and obscured in such interminable volumes, that some perspecacity and unwearying perseverance are necessary to extract what need never have been thus concealed; but when any portion of the works of these interminable thinkers falls into the hands of one of these village sages, if after vast labour he can snatch out one rag of the fa[illegible]ul mantle, which his author originally purloined from the Greeks, he swells in his own estimation, at least, to the level of his master.

In physical sciences, if he reads some commonplace absurdity, attributing the invention of the steam engine to Hiero, who observed the force of the vapour from the spout of a kettle of boiling water, and applied it to twirl round some revolving toy, it immediately strikes him that he has made the same observation; and, enamoured with the originality of his own unappreciated genius, perhaps he sets to work to study the steam-engine; and when he has slowly toiled so far as to understand its general principle, is at once satisfied that he could have invented and can improve it; and that the whole civilized world ought to raise statues to him.

Now Johann Sauer, though born in Russia, was a self-styled *philosophus* and *mechanicus*. It is true that he had never read more than thirteen or fourteen volumes of history, geography, philosophy, and literature, out of which, two were catalogues of pictures, one a spelling-book, and the rest odd volumes. But then, as he said, he had well and inwardly digested them. His claim to the title of *mechanicus*, on which he chiefly piqued himself, had been long deferentially admitted by many persons of note, whose countenance the patronage of Prince Isaakoff had procured for him, and rested chiefly

on his being the hundred and ninety-fourth inventor (at least at the date of our story ; for the same invention is renewed by different persons in Germany and Russia, and figures in the newspapers at least five-and-twenty times a year,) who, by means of an ingenious system of cog-wheels, proposed to supersede the power of steam.

Few of our readers, in these days of Encyclopedias and Penny Magazines, will assuredly be ignorant that all mechanical contrivances are only an application of power in different ways. With all the wheels, and pulleys, and cogs, and springs in the world, you cannot gain the power of a mite, though when you have derived it from animal force, or steam, or falling water, you may regulate it so as to give a more rapid motion with less force, or more force with less rapidity. On the contrary, you lose a little of the power you have by friction. This is the very first rule—the A. B. C. of mechanism, in the teeth of which these worthies proceed with their inventions, the ingenuity of which may be aptly illustrated by comparing it to that of the Irishman, who cut off the top of his sheet and sewed it to the bottom to make it longer.

Nevertheless, Johann acquired some celebrity, and, once brought into notice, found plenty of

protectors, among whom were the minister of public instruction and two or three generals of engineers, who proved their faith in his genius by considerable advances of money. He constructed many little droschkies, which could be moved with very great labour by the person sitting on them, and a small vessel which was boasted to have come up the Gulf of Finland from Peterhoff in a terrible storm, a fact which seemed for the moment triumphantly to establish his success, until it was found that it would not move in a calm; and that, on the occasion in question, it had come up with the wind, and not against it—a circumstance about which every one had hitherto forgotten to inquire.

Gradually the pecuniary support of his patrons was withdrawn, though even then the contemptuous opinions of the English mechanics and engineers were attributed to jealousy, particularly when they opined "that the man was one part knave and three parts fool, and that those who encouraged him were wholly the latter."

Nevertheless, the Prince Isaakoff, looking upon him as a man in advance of his age, continued warmly to befriend him, and sent him to superintend his mines in the government of Perm.

Here he further distinguished himself by

sending up to the national exhibition the first Russian locomotive engine made on the model of one of Stephenson's, and closely resembling it, at least externally; for it would not work, and the boiler would not even hold water.

The working of these mines the Prince was forced to abandon, because, flourishing as they were, he found that the slaves employed brought him in four times more revenue at the occupations from which he had withdrawn them; which, considering that in those desert and inhospitable regions, a truss of hay cost him sometimes three shillings was not to be wondered at. When this event took place, Johann was placed as assistant to the steward of the estate in the government of Kalouga, and in a short time contrived to step into his shoes.

Notwithstanding his philosophic mind and his mechanical genius, Johann had long since learned to look with as vigilant an eye to the "main chance" as his half-brother, the philanthropic Dietrich; and, as the scientific disappointments he had met with had soured his disposition, he did not, in his dealings with the serfs under his control, much temper with the *suaviter in modo* the *fortiter in re*.

He had evidently learned to consider himself as the worm of a sort of social press, and those

under his authority, as intended by Providence to be screwed down to the last possible turn, and he had always acted according to this conviction, in as far, at least, as he had not been checked by the fear of shocking the benevolence of his master.

Johann was blessed with a wife, a daughter, and a son. The wife was fat, short, round, and fair, though by no means beautiful, the skin covering her heavy features being thin and of a lively pink, her very light flaxen hair, eye-lashes, and eye-brows, reminding one, as they relieved it, of the pale white bristles on the blushing skin of the back of a young sucking-pig.

In temper she was so imperious, that all the serfs on the estate considered her as a providential retribution on Johann, and in her habits she was so thrifty, that she stinted him even in the sugar of his afternoon's coffee.

Their daughter, Trautchen, took morally and physically after her parents, excepting that, as regarded her personal appearance, she seemed to have been drawn out from breadth into length, was deeply pitted with the small-pox, and had one eye the colour of her father's, the other a fac-simile of the tint and shape of her mother's, not omitting those white spots which constitute the

wall eye; whilst, furthermore, as if to convince themselves of this unusual peculiarity, the balls of these organs of vision were incessantly turning towards each other.

Hans, the son, was a heavy, stupid, clownish youth, without any very marked propensity, excepting sloth and gluttony, to either good or evil.

Now, when the old Prince, in the absence of Mattheus, treated his sister so like a daughter, she had been the object of the unceasing civility of this family, both as a means of paying their court to the old man, and because the father and mother indulged the then ambitious hope that a match might be patched up betwixt the hopeful Hans and a *protégée* for whom the Prince avowed his intention of providing so handsomely.

But it has been already shewn, how, when the benevolent master of Nadeshta sent her to complete her education at Moscow, once weaned from the habit of her company, he, on her return, with a very unusual delicacy, judged it better for her future prospects that, as a young and beautiful girl, she should not live under his roof, and arranged that, until the return of her brother, she should reside with the family of the Sauers.

Now, Johann and his wife, during the first period of her sojourn with them, treated her quite like a spoiled child; notwithstanding her active and enthusiastic advocacy of the cause of the oppressed peasantry, her spirited denunciations of Johann's conduct, and her frequent letters to the Prince upon the subject; the Prince reading with delight these evidences of a fervent and poetic temperament, though without ever attaching the slightest weight to their contents.

It was true that Johann, with some Machiavelian ingenuity—aware of the danger of the Prince's once becoming thoroughly acquainted with the condition of his slaves during his occasional visits to this portion of his property; —had taken the precaution to assume in all his dealings with them exactly the same tone of maudlin kindness in his words, as was habitual to the Prince; so that, accustomed to hear it constantly associated with harshness and extortion, when the master really came, the graciousness of his inquiries had not the effect of thawing into communicativeness the sullen reserve of his slaves. But it was not with the children as with the parents, for Hans, having been incessantly reminded of their desire that he should make himself

agreeable to Nadeshta, had for a long time, in a dogged spirit of obstinacy, preferred the more easy and natural task of rendering himself exactly the reverse: and, as for the daughter, Trautchen, her spite, ill-nature, and ill-will she had from the first been unable to conceal. She had, at least, however, the merit of consistency, for she was the only one of the family who saw no cause to change in their treatment of her; for, just as the father and mother were beginning to awaken Hans to a sense of his disobedience, they heard through the medium of Dietrich, both of the hopeless malady of the old Prince and his unwillingness to enfranchise or provide effectually either for her or her brother, until the recovery to which he vainly looked forward. The very different position in which Nadeshta was thus placed made a corresponding difference in their behaviour towards her, and then they found that the interest which it had been so difficult to excite in Hans, was quite as difficult to allay; for, as he said of himself, he was like the clay stuffing of a Russian stove, if he was slow to heat, he was slow to cool.

Nadeshta—whom we have seen, as if with a presentiment of what was to befall her, so painfully alive to her condition; Nadeshta, ever since she had left Moscow, had obstinately

persisted in wearing the costume of a peasant girl, though finer in material and fitted with all the art of the milliner, and in this there was more pride than humility; or, it was rather, perhaps, the result of the ambition which had utterly absorbed all trace of vanity in her— ambition which aspires to be what vanity only strives to seem. Anxiously looking forward to the arrival of her brother, whose presence would determine the old Prince to emancipate them, whilst she longed so ardently to be freed, she was utterly careless of appearing what she was in the eyes all.

When her star was still supposed to be in the ascendant, Johann and his wife, after vainly endeavouring to induce her whom they coveted as their future daughter-in-law to renounce her sympathies and intercourse with the serfs of the estate, and to assume the costume of Western Europe, which is at once distinctive of another and higher caste, chose to remember that the Empress and the ladies of the court had recently adopted the national dress; but, as soon as the hopeless malady of the old Prince was known, the wife vented all her long dissembled malice, —Trautchen, that which she had so long been obliged to restrain—in heaping every humiliation on her. She was twitted with her con-

dition; she was told that her peasant's dress was exactly fitting for a slave; she was refused the use of her own piano by the daughter, and told by the mother, who locked up her books, that it would be more fitting for her to attend to the kitchen, the dairy, or the cow-yard, to which, doubtless, she would have been driven, had it not been for the prudence of Johann, who observed that the old Prince was not yet dead.

"The human frame," quoth he, "is a machine after all."

"A machine!" echoed the wife; "look after your stewardship. I am sick of your machining: you have spoiled all the churns, and stopped every clock in the house; and the bakehouse chimney will not draw at all since you have improved it by boring it full of holes."

"And yet," said Dietrich, "it was on the same principle as the chimney I altered at the glass-house works."

"Yes, and the Prince's friend complains it will not draw at all since you have meddled with it."

"It did not draw much before," said Johann, in extenuation of his humiliating failure.

"Hold your tongue about machines: when did any of yours ever answer?"

"All scientific operations are proverbially uncertain. But, as I was saying, the human frame is a mere piece of mechanism; and precisely as, when I have had reason to suppose, after long meditation and labour in constructing a piece of machinery, that it would act, and that it has failed to do so, by the same rule of uncertainty, although medical science and experience may expect the Prince's internal mechanism to stop, it may you know just possibly disappoint them and continue to go on."

"Well," said the wife, "I should think there was something in that, if it came out of the mouth of anybody else; but do you, at any rate, lose no time in putting all the account of your stewardship in order."

"Yes," repeated Johann, elated with the unusual impression which he had made; "yes, the human frame is a machine; philosophy teaches us that: and the English philosopher, Bacon, made the same observation. His name, my dear, means salted pigs-flesh."

"Ah!" said the wife, "the only sensible thing I ever heard about philosophy; but now, I remember, there are nine sows expected to litter within this next week; have they been brought in?"

"No," said Johann; "you are right, my

dear. The peasants will cheat us out of half the young pigs if they litter in their own stys." And the steward went off to give his orders before he forgot to do so.

At length the Lord had died; and still Nadeshta met the fresh humiliations showered upon her with the same cold, haughty, sarcastic, and unpropitiating patience; although, even now, the hatred and malice of the Sauers was partially diverted, and its full exercise postponed by the uncertainty of the respect which the young heir might show to his father's predilections, and of his continuing Johann in his situation.

Now Nadeshta, who by her brother's last letter had been made aware that he was on his way homewards, was intently watching for the arrival of Hans, who had been that day to the adjacent post-town; but the letters of which Hans was the bearer were taken from him by Johann's wife, who refused to allow her husband to peruse them because the coffee was getting cold. The coffee is a particularly important meal with the German settlers in Russia; and after the mid-day dinner follows the two hours' siesta which intervenes. It was served in the gold and purple Turkish china cups, as thin as an egg-shell, mounted in their stands of filagree silver

—a present from the late Prince to Nadeshta, who formerly had often been called on to preside at its distribution as the greatest compliment Johann's wife could pay her. But now, times were changed; she was not even offered any: and, when Hans saw this, he heaved a deep sigh of compassion, and turned thoughtful. As if purposely, she was rudely excluded whilst the letters were being read; but she could not help observing that the result of their perusal had been to throw Trautchen and her parents into a state of some confusion and consternation.

Whilst she was pondering over the cause of this change, which was occasioned by the announcement of Prince Isaakoff's proximate arrival, Hans stealthily approached her; his finger was on his lips, as if to bespeak discretion; there was a small bunch of hot-house grapes in his hand, and an awkward bashfulness in his demeanour.

"Nadeshta," said he, "don't tell my mother or Trautchen, because I do not want to give them any. I—I like you best, you know: these are fine hothouse muscatels. I bought three pounds of them; and very dear, but very nice they were."—Here he looked wistfully at them.—"I have finished all but this; but as they have given me the stomach-ache, I dare

not eat any more. I had saved them for to-morrow."—Here Hans looked first at the grapes, and then at Nadeshta, and picked off several of the largest, which he swallowed.—" I had put them by till to-morrow; but as my mother gave you no coffee,"—here he picked off a few more—" I mean these for you;" and with a violent and sudden effort he put an end to his internal hesitation by handing them desperately to her.

"Thank you, Hans; but keep your grapes: you can do me a greater favour, which won't cost you anything."

"Can I?" said Hans, eagerly, withdrawing them.

"Do you think there was any letter for me amongst those you brought?"

But at this moment Nadeshta was called into the kitchen; and the Frau Sauer handed to her an open letter, addressed by Nadeshta's brother o her; anticipating all comment by saying haughtily:

"I have opened this; and I should have burned it, but I cannot read it, for it is in French—what is it about?"

Nadeshta read—" Dearest sister: In the deepest affliction I am consoled to think that in a few days after this I shall be with you—"

Nadeshta's heart beat high! The writing was scrawled with a tremulous hand, the page spotted with tears; but still she was about to clasp him to her bosom!

"What does he say? It is not long!"

Nadeshta's eyes flashed fire; she crushed the letter in her hand, and cast it into the grate.

"Ask the flames!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" shouted Hans.

Madame Sauer contracted her brows for a moment; and then appearing to reflect, she vented her anger, by giving Hans a blow upon the head with a rolling-pin.

Hans whimpered and sneaked off to his own room to solace himself with the rejected bunch of grapes; but there he cried outright; for he found, alas! when he drew them from his pocket, that he had sat down upon, and crushed them.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE Prince Isaakoff was giving a farewell dinner to a small party of his intimates before he started for the country. There was Lochadoff, and Durakoff, and Jakof, and the poet, and the poet's brother-in-law, and Alexius, with whom the reader is already acquainted; and amongst those who have not been introduced to his notice a tall, hard-featured, grey-headed, elderly gentleman was seated next to Horace.

The dinner is over; the vast epergne, groaning beneath its picturesque load of fruit, and modelled in graceful combination from several of the Parisian fountains, scatters in tiny spray its four streams of odours—from the mouths of dolphins, or the amphora of nymphs, or the fluvial urns of river gods, of frosted silver—the rose-water and the liquids perfumed with the blossoms of the orange and the citron, and the scents of the violet, and the aromatic

distillations from the borders of the Rhine—the fragrance of the most unfragrant of cities.

The Burgundy, in recumbent bottles, crusted without and within, rolls slowly round on a wheeled car, supported by the eager arms of exquisitely chiselled golden Bacchantes, who seem at once to implore and to command the guests to handle their precious burthen gently, and by no rude motions to disturb or ruffle the serenity of temper of their god, whose spirit glows above them in ruby red, in the midst of the rich deposit which time has made along one side of the sea-green glass in which it has been so long reposing.

Horace was rather surprized to find that his neighbour was an English knight, or baronet, and, notwithstanding the little prepossession his physiognomy inspired, yielding to his predilections for all that was English, he addressed him in that language, and they were soon deep in animated conversation.

Sir James Crafty was a canny Scotsman, but of the Scotch character he had nothing but the thrift, the shrewdness, and the bravery. A residence of half a century in the country had made him in everything a Russian, and yet he delighted occasionally to hear his native tongue, and to affect for an evening, to those

with whom he conversed in it, the liberality and freedom of opinion, together with the blunt, harsh, sarcastic frankness common to the Land of Cakes.

Horace soon learned from him that, since the reign of Catherine, he had been deep in the confidence of the imperial family, and, in truth, he had obtained, on the personal request of the late Emperor, as his physician, his baronetcy from George IV.

It was also true that he had presided over and very creditably organized the whole medical department of the Russian empire, though his own medical abilities were considered by the other foreign doctors as of the lowest order.

He had amassed a large fortune, and risen to high favour and dignity, and was universally considered as the depositary of many secrets, not only of the reigning, but of the principal families of the empire.

Even recently, he had exhibited in the Turkish war a cool and determined bravery which had put many an aide-de-camp to the blush. On the other hand, he was noted for the un-Scotch disfavour and jealousy with which he treated his countrymen, and for the parsimonious meanness of his own hospitality, though he was accounted a man whose com-

pany the prospect of a good dinner would any where secure.

"So I saw by the English papers," replied the Baronet, in answer to an observation Horace had made.

"Did you?" said Horace. "It appears a difficult thing to see any thing in them worth reading. I receive them with paragraphs daubed over with ink and whole columns cut out, whilst others are not allowed to enter at all."

"Ay, mon, all that is the censorship."

"So I hear. And then they have confiscated half my books. My Don Juan for instance."

"Oh that," said the Baronet, with an expressive shrug of the shoulders; "that is because it reflects on the virtue of the Empress Catherine."

"And Maryatt's Pacha of Many Tales."

"The censorship suspected it to contain some implied satire, or something disrespectful to constituted authorities."

"Well," said Horace, "and lastly, I had a sort of general history and geography, from which they have cut out the two or three lines which stated that Paul was the victim of a conspiracy and was strangled in 1801."

"God bless you!" laughed the Baronet; "Paul died of apoplexy in all our Russian

histories. No Russian Emperor could be admitted to have died by the profane hands of his subjects."

"And I find," said Horace, "that I cannot even put an advertisement into the papers for a valet without the sanction of the censor's office."

"Nothing can be printed in the country, nothing in print admitted from abroad under the severest penalties; you may not even print a prospectus of tooth-powder, or introduce one of Day and Martin's blacking bottles, on account of its labels, without such authorisation."

"How very ridiculous!" observed the Count. "But do you mean to say that there is any doubt on the subject of Paul's death?"

"Fill your glass, mon!" replied the Baronet, with a merry twinkle in his eye. "There is every doubt in the world as to how he came exactly by his death, as I can testify, for the conspirators all told different stories, and his head was so beaten in, and his body so bruised, that it was difficult to say, professionally speaking, what had killed him, and whether it was the strangulation of the sash, or the beating in of his skull with a bootjack; though their agitation was excusable enough, for the killing of an Emperor must have been as nervous

a matter as a young surgeon's maiden amputation. I ought to know as much about it as any one, you will say, because, as you know, it is the custom in Russia to lay the dead Emperors out in state, I was ordered to perform the task of patching up the body, so that by a dim light it might present no very visible marks of violence, and what with a little wax and paint, a very tidy job I made of it; so that *I don't believe that he died of apoplexy*. Hout tout, mon!" he continued, seeing an involuntary expression of horror cloud the countenance of his neighbour; "take a glass of wine upon it. Why what would you do in a dissecting room?"

Here the conversation became general.

"Scents!" said Jakof, "I hate all odours!"

"Of course!" said Durakoff, laughing, "you were asking for a story, and Jakof reminds me of one, of which he is the hero. I will tell it to you."

"Oh that stale stupid trick!" said Jakof. "You want my horses to-night, and you shan't have them if you bore us with that."

"My dear fellow, when I reflect that Isaakoff does not know it, I cannot resist the temptation of narrating the little episode. Besides, I am sure when he has heard it, that he will lend me his own if you refuse."

"I'll give you a pair of horses for a story about Jakof," said Isaakoff, "if it is a good one."

"We do not know what you offer; for at that rate you would get rid of the twenty thousand horses in the old Countess Orloff's stud," replied Durakoff, "because our friend there lends to good stories."

"I have lent to you," observed Jakof.

"So you have, especially on that very occasion."

"Yes; and a precious fool I was."

"The demonstration of which fact is the very point of my story. Know then, gentlemen, that our friend, Jakof, whose wit and wealth are notoriously in inverse ratio; and as he always pleads poverty to those who come to borrow of him, he can only take the axiom as a compliment. Our friend, Jakof, whose habitual liberality is not proverbial, will nevertheless stick at no reasonable or unreasonable sum, when the whim takes him, particularly for anything unique in its kind; he would give more for a mouse-trap, if it was the only one in the world, than for all Canova's statues. I do not mean to say that sometimes this taste has not its advantages; for instance, there is the cruel Esmeralda, who has treated Jakof's wealth and wit with as much coldness and disdain as so many other people's

poverty and dulness, the Esmeralda is raving about a dress, a cap, or a bonnet—I forget which, but it is the only one in the city; and Jakof is the happy possessor of it." Here the speaker, Lochadoff, and the Prince, interchanged a malicious glance, whilst Jakof looked stolidly self-satisfied.

"A week ago she would not allow Jakof to cross her threshold; when she met him she made her coachman drive to the other side of the road; and now she dreams of him, they say. Of course you will readily understand, gentlemen, that Jakof has become the hero of her imagination, since he can give her what the Emperor cannot."

"The Emperor," suggested Lochadoff, "might it is true, give her Jakof himself, and the piece of millinery she covets too."

"How could you imagine," said Isaakoff, "that an Emperor would make so sorry a present?"

"Well," continued the narrator, "I was about to relate to you why the Esmeralda conceived such an antipathy for Jakof. You must know then, that the capricious beauty took it into her head to sport the costume of an Andalusian *maja*. I sent forthwith to our embassy at Madrid.

"One of the attachés was exactly my figure; and according to his own measure, he sent for to Seville, and despatched to me by an extraordinary courier, the full and orthodox habit of a *majo.*

"Now I was that very day desirous of borrowing ten thousand roubles of Jakof, and Jakof was very little desirous of lending them, until he saw the majo's dress; and then he was so pressing that I at last gave it up to him. I assure you it was less the prospect of the loan, gentlemen, than the idea of seeing him in tight sky-blue satin inexpressibles, with silver lace on all the seams, which tempted me. Friendship triumphed over vanity. He fulfilled his agreement in sending me the money, which I propose to return to him when the paper and silver roubles are at par; and I more than fulfilled mine; for I not only sent him the Andalusian costume, but something more in it:—a couple of little silver paper bags, sewed into it, containing each a half an ounce of musk. He had no sooner presented himself and reaped the harvest of the Esmeralda's smiles, than people began to fly right and left,—no musk-rat, no musk-goat, no opposum, ever smelt half so intolerable—the Esmeralda changed her quarters, abandoned her furniture, and burned her

clothes. They say that Jakof lay sixteen hours a day for the next three months up to his chin in a tan-pit, to get rid of the odour; and there is at least this foundation for it that he was never seen abroad, though some say that notwithstanding he actually smells of musk yet."

"Never mind," said Jakof, resolutely filling his glass, "the Esmeralda is all right now, and those who have the last laugh, gentlemen, laugh the merriest. I am not often taken in."

"Not often, but in a manner worthy of recording," said the Prince. "I shall call on the poet for a song, or a story, or a sonnet next; meanwhile here is mine. It is nine words long, and Jakof is again the hero of it, so fill and let us toast him, gentlemen. It flashes across my mind like a dimly remembered dream that Jakof, whilst still in the service, was in the habit of giving little private dinners to certain personages—gluttonous and influential. I forget whether he wanted leave of absence or promotion, but I know that, whatever he wanted, he judged that the road to the human heart was through the stomach. Always alive to his means of seduction, he tasted at my table—"

"Oh!" exclaimed Jakof, "those cursed mangoes! I have never yet paid you off for that."

"Well, he tasted and became enamoured of some of the West Indian pickled mangoes, and teased me for them. I was putting on, as he left me, one of the then newly invented clogs of caoutchouc, and a luminous thought struck me; I fished out the vegetable solid, and leaving only the thickened vinegar, cut up one of my india-rubber goloshes into delicate slices, sealed up the jar and sent it to his house. The gourmands, hearing of a novelty, were all impatience. Imagine an old gentleman with just seven teeth trying to cut a slice of India-rubber with his knife, and then, after an ineffectual effort, greedily lifting it to his mouth with a fork, and beginning to chew and chew away, whilst Jakof complacently asked him 'if it was not delicious?'

"'It is very tough,' said the General, with his mouth full.

"'Oh you have no teeth,' said his companion, taking up a piece impatiently with his fingers."

"Confound your jokes," said Jakof, who could not help smiling at the recollection of the scene, "that laugh cost me another obligatory twelve months in the service. The old fogies thought I was quizzing them."

"At all events it is paid for beforehand

then," said Horace; "but I thought the poet was next to be called upon."

"What is the use of calling upon me," replied that personage, "I know of no merry conceits; my voice would only be like the tolling of funeral bells in the midst of a wedding or a merrimaking."

"So much the better," said the Prince, "it will offer the more lively contrast to our buffoonery. Bring more wine, and give every man a narguila."

"Since," said the poet turning towards Horace, "you have imposed upon me the task, I must call on you to give me a subject."

"A subject," said Horace, "if that is all you want I will soon find you a subject. If it is to be serious, there is for instance, jealousy, the most common, the most terrible, the most fatal of passions."

"Be it, then, jealousy, the most terrible and fatal of all human emotions," replied the poet, glancing for an instant inquiringly at Horace, and then allowing his eyes to travel with an instantaneous but sinister expression towards his brother-in-law, after which he continued:

"When we come to reflect on the intensity of this all-absorbing passion, it becomes only difficult, when well founded, to find any possible retribution which can inflict punishment approaching what poetical justice requires."

"I never was jealous but once," observed Jakof.

"And then," said Isaakoff, "as it was of the intelligence of your bull terrier, it is an instance we will not cite; so hold your tongue."

"I was observing," continued the poet, "that nothing is more difficult to conceive than a vengeance measured by the intensity of jealousy. Death, ruin, degradation, pain, what are they to the long enduring pangs of those on whom it preys? But still it does incite to terrible vengeances, and you shall hear one."

"A poetical example?" inquired Isaakoff.

"A real example," replied the poet.

"Poetically told?"

"Prosaically told, as you will hear. I can afford so to divest the narration of all poetic embellishment, that I can make it an affair of A, B, C, like a problem in Euclid, or a sum in proportions.

"You have only to suppose, gentlemen, that A is an old weather-beaten soldier; his hair is grizzled less with time than care. His life has been a life crowded with many accidents by field and flood, and the snows of age have descended on his honoured head, whilst his heart is still generous and ardent, and his blood still warm and wild. His arm is yet full of prowess, his eagle eye still speaks of the determination and

the genius which have earned him the meed of heroism and of wisdom.

"B— is one of two fair sisters loving and loveable, and weak and vain. She was pleased and proud when she saw him, whose name was in all men's mouths, at her feet; and he, whose life had been the voyage of the tempest-tossed, longed to repose from all its wild waves and its buffetings within so sweet a haven as her arms.

"C— is an untutored boisterous youth, passionate, impetuous, without respect for anything human or divine, and with scarcely more hairs yet in his downy beard than there are scars on the breast of the veteran or leaves in the laurel-wreath encircling his brows."

"I see it all," interrupted the Prince, "as A was to B, so was B to C,—at least in the second act, the second chapter, or the second stanza, that is to say, the grizzled A was in love with B, whilst the fair B loved the inconsiderate and impetuous C."

"Well, since you sum up so briefly, imagine then that where the old man sought for rest and peace, and love, and happiness, he found disquietude and such anxieties as moved to agony a breast steeled, as he thought, to all adversities and sorrows. He had spent some months in all the

horrors, not of jealousy only, but of doubt, when he removed with his wife far away from cities and from human society with their contaminations.

"They retired to an old habitation, with thick walls creviced by age, and long since loopholed for defence; it hung besides suspended on the edge of a bare steep rock, like the nest of a king-fisher over the subjacent waters of an angry torrent.

"One day, these overwhelming doubts and terrible suspicions were fearfully resolved; for his sudden return and noiseless step enabled him to surprise, in the chamber of the tower overhanging the rock and river, a visitor in close converse with his wife.

"'And your dream, dearest?' said the visitor.

"'Oh my dream! my terrible dream! It seemed to me as if we were both suspended by that fearful rope, and that the rope had broken, and that, still clasped in each other's arms, we were dashed against the rocks and drowning in the torrent!'

"'At least,' said he, 'we should not then have been parted; they would have laid us in one grave.'

"'In one grave!' echoed the wife; 'how very

sweet, to think that nothing should ever part us more—that the winter's blast should howl, and the summer's sun shine over it, and that still we should lie there for ever and ever together.'

"'But the sun is rising. I hear some one stirring; fare thee well;' and, with a hasty kiss, he vanished through the window.

"'To-morrow, dearest!'

"'To-morrow!'

"'To-morrow!' echoed the husband, sheathing his sword; and he retired stealthily as he had come, to meditate for four and twenty hours a vengeance worthy of a man, who had found the hopes of a long and agitated life so wantonly and pitilessly wrecked.

"The day had passed—another night had come:—the cold pale moon was shining out—the lady watching. There arose a sound like the warbling of a thrush disturbed from the ivy of the old grey wall in some amorous dream; and the lips of the wife simulated the sweet response. She hastily threw down a long, long cord of many fathoms from the window, and bound the farther end round the marble pillar of the mantel-piece, tying the knot so carefully; and then making another signal, she held the rope besides in her fair hands, as if to add their frail and fond security to the precious burthen

which it was to bear aloft. At this moment the husband stepped forward noiselessly, and, with his uplifted sword in act to strike above her head, remained for some seconds motionless . . . ."

"He was a fool!" said Jakof; "he should have used a whip. It was a stupid revenge enough to strike her thus; for I suppose he got tired of the uplifted sword, and struck at last."

"He struck—but not his wife."

"Well then, the lover; but he need not have reflected four and twenty hours for that."

"Not the lover."

"Himself?"

"No. He struck and half severed the rope behind her; and when his voice had thundered in her ear the terrible warning to hold fast for the dear life of him who hung suspended by it, he entirely severed its last yielding twists with his trenchant blade. Then sheathing it, he folded his arms and looked quietly on to enjoy his vengeance.

"If there be any human retribution excepting jealousy itself, which can measure out an equal meed of suffering for jealousy, it must have been in the wife's unspeakable protracted agony.

"The betrayed husband was there before her,

fascinating her with his fiend-like gaze; and she was clutching the rope which held her lover over the precipice and flood, with all the desperate energy of love and terror, and with the horrible consciousness that her strength was fast deserting her.

"Could she call to her husband for assistance? Could she even call on Heaven? Imagine, gentlemen, the superhuman efforts of despair to hold on another second and another second, the terrible and hopeless effort as her frail wrists became numbed, and her bloodless hand grazed by the cord, to relinquish which was the murder of her lover.

"Even in this last extremity, when she would have implored even his pity and felt so piteous an eloquence of supplication arising from her soul as no human obduracy could have withstood, her freezing lips refused her utterance, and a hazy film, floating before her eyes, denied even to them the language of imploration. . . ."

"There!" continued the poet fiercely, "was a vengeance worthy of an outraged husband—the contemplation of such a scene!"

"Horrible!" said Horace; "and how did it end?"

"Thus:—the savage ecstacy of the old man vanished like a dream dispelled, to leave him

nothing but the memory of the past. The rope gave way at length :—there was a scream—the heavy sound of a falling body, as the mangled trunk bounded from rock to rock, leaving its clotted hair and the fragments of clothes on every briar, and then a sullen plunge, and all was over; but, after all, the lady did not kill her lover, for she died first; and it was only when her heart had burst that the cord slid away from the relaxing grasp of her inanimate hands!"

"Very good," said Isaakoff. "I suppose that, after that, the husband hardly laid them in the same grave, though they had well merited so trifling an indulgence."

"Pardon me, gentlemen, if I venture to speak after so great a poet," said the Lieutenant Alexius; "but, perhaps, you remember the story of the famous painter of Antwerp, who had designed the immortal horrors of the fallen angels, and whose pupil, Quentin Matsys, when all had declared that nothing could add to the picture, heightened its terrors by designing on the thigh of the arch-fiend, a bee, the emblem of remorse: so, in a like manner, I can humbly pretend, by setting forth the sequel, which the narrator has either never heard or forgotten, to impart one deeper shade to the story."

"Let us hear."

"Then, gentlemen, after the catastrophe, the veteran found amongst his wife's papers some reason to believe that the supposed lover was a natural brother of his wife; and, as he could never clear up whether this was truth or a tale, which they were getting up to deceive him, he lived on in the cruel doubt of having wreaked this diabolic vengeance on a tender, guiltless woman; and so it happened that, after all, whether lovers or brother and sister, in a moment of remorse they were laid to sleep in a common grave."

"Oh!" said the poet, burying his face for a moment in his hands, "yes that doubt must have been horrible! horrible! horrible! better all the pangs of jealousy than that;" and he spoke not another syllable the whole evening.

Sir James Crafty now rose, and, pleading an engagement, took his departure. As he was going he cordially shook hands with Horace.

"Did you ever taste a Welch rabbit?" said he.

"No."

"Then come and sup with me to-morrow."

"You are very kind," replied Horace; "but we start before break of day for the interior."

"Dear me, how provoking! Then we must defer it till your return."

"Oh we can put off our departure till the next day," said the Prince, making a sign to Horace.

"Really," said Horace, "I think it would be better to postpone the pleasure of supping with Sir James."

"I'll not hear of it," exclaimed Sir James. "I will not hear of disturbing your arrangements."

"Now I reflect," replied the Prince, "we shall hardly be able to start to-morrow."

"No, no, no," said Sir James, pressing Horace by the hand and darting off. "I withdraw my invitation. I will not be the means of detaining a whole party; but on your return do not forget the Welch rabbit;" and with these words, the worthy Doctor vanished.

"What an old fox!" laughed the Prince. "Why did you not accept at once."

"I thought we were to start to-morrow."

"So we are; but do you think he would have asked you if he had not heard it?"

"Never mind, he was frightened," said Durakoff.

The wine passed round; and the party had retired to another room for coffee, when it was discovered that the poet and his brother-in-law had, as Jakof termed it, 'quietly evaporated.'

"How very odd," continued Jakof, "that he, being the only man allowed to speak freely, should commonly be so silent!"

"My dear Jakof," said Alexius, "I can answer you by a quotation from his own works, where, in a colloquy between a poet and the crowd—the crowd with whom you may identify yourself—says:

> ....Fashion the minds of thy brethren!—we are astute and wicked, shameless and ungrateful—we feel our hearts to be of clay, our souls filled up with rottenness."
>
> THE POET.
>
> Away! what can a gentle poet do with ye? go! petrify in your debasement! He cannot give ye soul. Away! your breath to him is like the tainted air of tombs. To restrain your grovelling passions, ye have the lash, the dungeon, and the axe. They must suffice for ye, vile slaves!*

"Hush! hush!" said Lochadoff, "your friend is a great poet and all that sort of thing; but don't let us repeat all that he writes. We have no licence; but imagine Count Horace giving him jealousy as a theme!"

"Where was the impropriety?" asked Horace.

"It was like talking of ropes to a man whose father has been hanged. His brother-in-law, who sat next to me, is a young Frenchman in our service. The poet took umbrage at the

* Pushkin.

attention he paid to his wife, and challenged him. Your countryman protested that his attention was all addressed to the wife's sister."

"Then marry her," said the poet. "He did marry her; but nevertheless, he is even now tormented by jealous doubts, they say. How do they get on together now, Alexius?"

"Alas!" said Alexius, "it is a sort of mania with my gifted friend, and he still alternates betwixt affection and suspicion of his brother-in-law."

"In short," said Jakof, "everybody knows that he is always trying to make up his mind whether he shall cherish him or cut his throat."

CHAPTER XIV.

Let the reader now imagine several hours to have passed by,—the card-tables, with their green baize, have been drawn out—the baize itself is whitened with the intricacies of the score; for, according to the true Russian custom, before every player are placed, a piece of pointed chalk and a small brush, with which he marks upon the cloth the points of the game, and the number of games, and the money he owes, and the money owing to him.

The play is waxing high; piles of notes change hands; and the heaps of humbler gold are shovelled over, as scarcely valued dross. And then when the notes are exhausted, the losers have recourse to pencil and paper—the precursors of still deeper stakes; the iced champagne goes frothing round, and cools the fever of excitement. Horace has won considerably

of the Prince; but the Prince's gains, even with this drawback, have been excessive; perhaps on this account he is not unwilling to interrupt the game; for, when Dimitri whispers, he rises up and says: "Gentlemen, the Tsigani—the gipsies!"

Jakof, staggering a little, swears that he cannot decipher his own score, though some one owes him a little fortune; so he quietly cuts out the piece of baize from the table and thrusts it into his pocket, saying, he will unravel it to-morrow; for he is too drunk and too much excited to perceive that the chalk marks will all be effaced by the time he gets home.

"The Tsigani! the Tsigani!" say the players, forgetting their losses and their gains, and the folding doors being thrown open, in troop the gipsies with their guitars and tambourines.

All over the world, the gipsies are still in their main characteristics the same. Still the same wild wandering race, belonging in feeling, tendencies, and feature, to one great family originally, a thieving caste of India, dispersed about the western world, but always retaining its identity, in a manner so distinct as would be wonderful, if it were not for the singularly exclusive nature of the sympathies of all this people. For the gipsy there is no fraternity

but with the gipsy:—true to his brethren, his obligatory devotion to them he hardly counts a virtue; but against all the rest of the human race he nourishes an unquenchable hatred. Nothing can dispel this deeply-rooted malice. No benefits, no kindnesses, can move his soul to gratitude, or love, or pity; and he lives and dies with detestation in his heart of all the world, except his tribe, and with the one hope and ambition of injuring and deceiving the Busnè or Gentiles.

"We know not," observes a Polish author, "whence this people comes, nor whither it is going. The gipsy seems utterly to want the organ of religion, he assumes carelessly the faith of the country in which he is dwelling, to cast it aside when he has crossed its boundary. A gipsy recently put to a cruel death in one of the Austrian provinces, turned to the Greek and Catholic priests, who were exhorting him, and promised to embrace the faith of whichever would furnish him with a pipe. The gipsy when taken in early childhood, and brought up in colleges—after going through his studies with credit and when distinguishing himself by his capacity—some day, true to his instincts, escapes from the midst of his colleagues on a stolen horse, verifying the adage of his people, that

the gipsy only remains amongst the Gentiles, like the wild goose amidst the tame, till the season of migration is arrived."

The community of this peculiar bent of mind, more than their nomade habits or their universal language, has caused the gipsies to retain in every country of Europe a striking similarity, although their condition naturally differs; since, everywhere studying to take advantage of the Gentiles, to the utmost that circumstances will allow, it varies according to the facilities which these circumstances afford.

There is no country in which they are, however, more prosperous than Russia:—not that the laws are there less stringent against them than elsewhere; but then the laws are so easily eluded by wealth, and wealth is here to the gipsy so easily attainable.

As they have taken in England to tinkering and fortune-telling, and in Spain to horse and mule dealing and stealing, so in Russia they resort to the song and dance.

The gipsy singers and dancers are as much in request with the higher order of Russians as the foreign dancers and singers with us; but there is this distinction that their taste for them is not forced, acquired, or affected, like our own; but a genuine, intense, absorbing passion.

As some of our nobility have sought their wives behind the scenes, the Russian magnates have sometimes shared their names and fortunes with these gipsy singers, and the gipsy bride has entered, in the spirit of Judith repairing to the tent of Holofernes, the palace of the magnate, to scatter his wealth abroad to her tribe.

This troop consists of men and women. Of the latter, those who are a little past the bloom of youth are growing hideous; but the two younger of the party have the same clear olive complexion, the same beautiful lips and pearly teeth, as some of their fortune-telling sisters of England; but their costume is semi-oriental: their deep dark eyes are rendered still more brilliant by the arts of eastern coquetry, which has dyed the interior of the lid.

Their profession, which is that of the Bayadere, has developed their natural grace, and given to their limbs the lightness and vigour of those of the antelope. Cinderella herself could not get on their slippers, whilst their figures display a snake-like, superhuman suppleness, in every movement.

The harmony of motion in their pantomimic dances, like the wild sweetness of their notes, is, or seems to be, utterly untutored; the plain-

tive wailing chant of the chorus, accompanied by the guitar, touched without any regard to the notes, is suddenly hushed, and one of the singers begins and pours out all the melody of a bird—a melody as spontaneous as impossible to record.

Then follow their lascivious dances — the writhings of the snake, and the bound of the deer, and the amorous notes of the singer translated into motion. Meanwhile, the wine bubbles freely round amongst the spectators; and when the gipsies pause at length exhausted, every one rewards them with heaps of notes and gold, and then besides their very rings and diamond studs and pins, resorting to the chimney-piece, they cast the gold and agate toys, the antique rosaries of Venetian gold, all into the apron of the sorceress.

Even Jakof cannot resist the temptation; he throws on the pile a bank note of large amount, and then suddenly repenting, he draws out half its value in change.

The gipsy flashes, from the depths of her dark eyes, an instantaneous but withering glance of hatred; but its effect is intercepted by his spectacles.

Then, having placed their treasures in safety, and glared over them with an avidity fearful to

behold in eyes so beautiful, as if refreshed with the sight of gold, the gipsy girls began their dance again.

Again the music sounds; the guitars seem to vibrate almost into fierceness; the other gipsies stamp and accompany it in chorus with their wild notes, and the dancers are excited to fury, and from fury to the phrensy of Bacchantes—the Bacchantes when they tore to pieces Orpheus in their delirium. At length they sink utterly exhausted on the floor, all excepting the two younger ones, whose beauty is judged most likely to fascinate the spectators into the utmost liberality; they, according to their custom, leap at a bound into the laps of the spectators, whom, interlacing in their arms, they embrace.

One has given the Prince the kiss which concludes the entertainment, the other has jumped on to the knees of Jakof.

"Oh! oh! oh!" bellows out Jakof, like a bull.

"Jakof is too bashful!" exclaims the Prince.

"He is afraid of being devoured!" laughed Lochadoff.

"So I am," said Jakof; "the cursed she-wolf has bitten through my cheek!"

And true enough, whether the spontaneous vengeance of the gipsy, or whether she was acting on a well-paid hint from some wag present, her small, white teeth had left a circular bleeding mark, as deeply indented as with the sharp fangs of a viper.

"Hark," said the Prince; "who will come with me to Moscow, or as much farther as you like?—My cook has already preceded me. I am going to engage all the gipsies to accompany us in four carriages as far as that city: two Italian singers are already joining our caravan. We will make the journey a race from one feast to another; we shall arrive at stations where a banquet is all prepared for us, and revel, and gamble, and drink till daylight, and then sleep through the day as we rattle over the road!"

"Hurrah!" reply with one accord the guests, who that night are captivated with the prospect of an expedition, which half of them will decline in the morning.

The gipsies drive a hard bargain; their season is not very successful, and they are really about to return to Moscow; but this is a fact which they carefully conceal; and the reward lavished on them for that night's performance enables the guests, in estimating Isaakoff's mag-

nificence, to judge of the fortune which it has cost him to secure them for the journey.

The gipsies retire, to sink—as soon as they are left alone — pell-mell upon the floor, utterly exhausted by the intensity of their exertions, into a serpent-like torpor. For the scene they have been this night enacting they have repeated, not only many times during the same day, but for many successive days and nights, in their eagerness to gather in an ample harvest; and yet this scene they have just engaged to act over and over—so galvanically does the prospect of gain seem to waken up their over-strung nerves from the death-like reaction into which they are ready to relapse to the most vivid animation.

Jakof is gone home, wiping his cheek with the green baize which he cut from the card-table, and now mistakes for his handkerchief, and cursing all dancing-girls, as he thinks on the black patch he will have to wear.

Isaakoff and Horace, and some of the guests, have retired to seek the refreshment of the bath and of the couch; the rest have driven homewards; and, at the noise of their vehicles as they drive out of the yard, the slave, Mattheus, is awakened, and starts up from the

straw on which he has been sleeping in the kennel. Last night, wan, weary and enfeebled, he was brought back from the siege, and locked up there to await his master's pleasure in the morning.

Sleep, which sometimes flies from the restless eyelids of the pampered oppressor to comfort the oppressed, had stolen over him, and he was dreaming of the balmy South, and of Blanche, and of happiness; and was again transported back to the hour when she first confessed to him her love.

The noise of the carriage-wheels, and the shouts of the lacqueys as they roused the drowsy coachmen on their boxes, have disturbed this consoling vision. As he rises up, he strikes the pail from which he quenched his thirst last night, and the cold water, as he spills it over him, recalls him to the present.

A rat, which has been daintily nibbling at the black loaf beside him, rushes right into the very sleeve of the coarse brown caftan, which he has drawn over him like a blanket.

"Go," says Mattheus, disengaging the animal with sorrowful serenity; "I wish I could thus let free all the captives in the world."

CHAPTER XV.

The Prince Ivan and Horace stopped to dine a few stations beyond Moscow, whither, as usual, the cook had preceded them. But of all their numerous accompaniment there remained only one single attendant, whom they had brought with them in the rumble of the solitary carriage.

Tired out and wearied with their journey, which had been one long protracted orgie, mixed up with the fatigue of travelling six hundred miles, they had determined to spend the night at the post-house, so that, being thus refreshed, they might start early on the following morning, and get to the place of destination before nightfall.

Although the repast was as luxurious as usual, nothing could exceed the moderation with which they partook of it: Moselle, and

Seltzer water appearing alone to possess attractions for the frugal tastes of our travellers.

"We shall enjoy this quiet night by contrast," said Horace, drawing from his pocket two or three letters, and looking carelessly at the superscriptions. "See, we have been so long on the road that these letters have overtaken us."

"You are not obliged to read them."

"My dear Prince," continued Horace, "now we are alone together I want to ask you a question about Madame Obrasoff and her daughter."

"Ask *me* a question about them!" replied the Prince. "Why, my good fellow, you are surely inverting the natural order of things, which would be for me to ask questions on such a subject, and for you to answer them. Have you not been, for the last two months, riding about the Summer Gardens, and the gardens of Peterhoff, and the island of the Krestoffsky with the daughters, and perpetually driving out with the mother?"

"Nevertheless," said Horace, "though I have learned, through my intimacy with them, how anxious both mother and daughter are to find husbands, I wonder why they selected me as a matrimonial victim, when they are

evidently still considered rich by so many who are richer than I ?"

"My dear Horace," replied the Prince, "do not, for a moment, imagine that your French fortune can be of the slightest object to the Obrasoffs: their own is indisputably too considerable."

"Are you sure ?"

"Their estates adjoin my own. It is a matter of notoriety that they have not a peasant mortgaged."

"Then," said Horace, "why should they at once have laid a most transparent plan to draw so humble an individual as myself into their matrimonial snares ?"

"You are as much in error there as in your previous supposition. Those women do not marry; they are arch-coquettes; it is in the family blood; the daughter takes it from the mother; they lead men on to propose, for the pleasure of laughing at them."

Horace mused for a moment.

"Madame Obrasoff, with her feminine softness," continued the Prince, "and Anna, with her invidious frankness, are two of the most artful women I know; it is impossible to fathom them; they never compromise themselves, and they raise a laugh at the expense of

all their admirers—probably at yours just now, my dear Horace."

"If there be a laugh," said Horace, "at least it will not be at me, but with me."

The Prince shook his head incredulously, and Horace smiled.

"They had not to do with a novice. I grant you that mother and daughter may have both intended to deceive me, but I have deceived them both."

Isaakoff shook his head again.

"Then listen," said Horace. "This is from the daughter," and breaking the seal from one of his letters, he read :—

"So at length, dearest Horace, you are really going to Moscow, and going for three long weeks! You plead an engagement; oh! Horace, how many reasons I should have found not only to infringe such a hollow formality, but even to neglect, as in truth I am neglecting, serious and sacred duties, wherever they threatened to separate us! And yet I reproach you not, perhaps it is as well; you ought to possess a firmness which I neither covet nor desire, because, endowed with it, I should seem to love you somewhat less."

"Is that from Anna Obrasoff?" said the Prince, with astonishment.

"From Anna Obrasoff," and Horace proceeded.

"It is not alone your departure, but the company in which you are going, that I dread."

"She cannot mean the Tsiganes?"

"Oh! how I hate and fear that Prince Ivan, with his cold clammy hand and the frigid malignity of his death-like eye!"

"What say you to that, Isaakoff?"

"Little dear!" observed the Prince.

"Oh! beware of him, Horace," continued the Count; "only yesterday I heard that he would ruin you."

"I wish the little minx spoke truth!" exclaimed the Prince. "Hitherto it has been the other way, I am sorry to say, Miss Anna!"

"Dear Horace, to-morrow, as you request, I shall see you, and still hope to prevail on you to stay; at all events, I shall hear from your own dear lips that you will not be an hour away beyond those long interminable one and twenty days. Even now that you are near me, my life is strangely compounded of disquietude and of delight. When I reflect that you love me, I feel an indescribable elation, and then I remember how I love in terrible rivality with my mother!—a mother, who has been at once a sister, and a kind and sympathizing friend!

"I remember that to become your wife I may not only have to fly to a strange land—renounced by her—but I shall probably add to the disobedience of the child all those torments which I myself have felt, when at times I foolishly imagined that you loved my mother.

"You know, Horace, that I have often said to you—bewildered by my affection for you both—'Love her, and forget your Anna!' and then you have ever answered me that love depended not upon ourselves; and alas! I knew you spoke truly, for how could any effort have made me cease to love you?

"When you return, Horace, you will at least put an end to this: for, since you cannot love her, she is so anxious for the happiness of her children, that I am sure she will not offer the objections you anticipate and dread.

"I almost feared that I could not see you to-morrow, but I found that my mother had suddenly made up her mind to come to town, for the day after is her regular day. You know I have told you of her gloomy and mysterious days: one every week she spends in town; the next locked up, —whether here or in the country—in a boudoir with its treble oaken doors, beyond the outermost of which we have never penetrated. At my pressing solicitation she has agreed, against her

usual habit, that I should accompany her; and as on these occasions she is the whole day absent, we can ride in the Summer Garden, and then you can come home to us, where there will be no one but the deaf old governess Mamselle Mimi.

"You tell me that the lock of hair I gave you was not long enough for what you wanted, so I enclose you another: may you only prize it, dearest, as I value yours, which I am kissing now."

"Look" said Horace, "here is the lock of hair in question."

"And has she signed it?" said the Prince.

"Here is the signature of the would-be Countess of Montressan" said Horace—at least the christian name and the initial, "Anna O."

"Very good!" said the Prince.

"And now," continued Horace exultingly, "you shall hear what the mother says: but stop, who is this letter from? O! from my English groom; I must read that first."

"Nonsense!" replied the Prince, "let us hear what Madame Obrasoff says:—begin with the most interesting."

"Then, frankly, to me the groom's letter is the most interesting."

"Ungrateful!"

"Now for the groom's letter; he always begins

his sentences with small letters; and strenuously insists on doing so till you can shew him some difference of pronunciation betwixt them and the capitals.

"What," he says, "is the use of troubling yourself to make capitals if you are to read them just like ordinary letters.

BOB BRIDLE'S EPISTLE.

"Honored Sir, this is the 12th of August which the slow coaches of this country calls the 1st. I have reached this place, which I cannot tell you by name because I hav'nt yet contrived to spell it. The horse is doing well, and according to your desire I am training him along the road side. He was a little off his feed last night, and they have stole his bandages, but I have made some new uns by tearing up a shirt; they keeps the legs wonderful cool and comfortable; and though the strip of grass by the road side is the best ground ive seen to gallop on, still it is hard, with the dry weather.

"I'm afeard I shall have to part company with Dimitry, he will hurry on so, which if he would read his Bible he would know that the merciful man was merciful to his beast; besides which, honored sir, as I purceed with with his acquaintance, I find that he "*runs cunning*" and begin

to be satisfied (which is no satisfaction to myself) that he is a rogue and wag-a-bone, and a real Rooshian, as I wish, honored sir, you would tell his master."

"What do you say to that?" laughed Horace.

"Your correspondence is very flattering to me," said the Prince; "but Bob's letter contains one indisputable truth, where he states Dimitri's knavery, and even one sentence of truth is not so common in epistolary eloquence."

"The more I look for his honesty," continued Horace, "the more it won't shew itself."

"Is that mine or Dimitri's," said Isaakoff.

"The author's meaning is obscure."

"Though I don't think he can circumvent me, seeing that since I have been in foreign parts I have learned to keep a sharp look out after foreign counts, which, no offence, honoured sir to you, though you are a count yourself, for I do not mean you or the like of you, which is gentlemen as cut figures, but I mean the figures in the count-books, which you, sir, is so fond of cutting, leaving them all to me to settle as was brought up in a line altogether different.

"I have sent you two letters as was delivered to me, and I have something to tell you, honoured sir, as will surprise you, but which I

bottle up till I see yourself, because I hear that letters are apt to be opened, as my father's was, though that don't signify, because if them as peeped into it could read his writing they could do more than Bob Bridle, and was welcome.

"I found it out because the governor puts wax and wafer, and they say it is the government, which can have no reason unless they wants to get at the receipt for cleaning boot-tops or something of that sort, which they might have by asking above board and civilly for.

"We hold in England that what one man writes to another, what I might write, honored sir, to you, should be strictly between you and I and the post, which I suppose is where the Rooshians mistakes it—for what aint so pleasant—they likes to make it between you I and the post-office. With my respect and duty,

I remain your humble servant,

BOB BRIDLE.
(christened Robert.)

P.S.—excuse my not sending any postscript which I know is manners, but I have nothing more to say.

"A very good notion of a letter," observed the Prince; "now for Madame Obrasoff's."

"Here it is," said Horace, "you see it looks almost like her; the paper is just tinted with a scarce perceptible shade, and the wax exactly matches it in colour; the ink is pale and indistinct, and on the seal is the impression of a cameleon."

MADAME OBRASOFF'S LETTER.

"You write me, dear Horace, that you are going beyond Moscow, and I was not surprised; for I rose with a presentiment of evil; but at least to-morrow evening we will meet as you propose, at the same hour and on the same spot as before: my boat will remain out of the current, under the shade of the thickets of the Krestovsky, so that you will not perceive it till you come close in.

"On reading your letter through, I am startled to find that yesterday was one of your days on which we can hold no intercommunion of spirit: you are like one of those mortals, who at certain times can hear and understand the language of fairies, or the meaning of the song of birds, or the murmuring of the wind, but to whom the gift is utterly denied at others. Sometimes I am almost led to doubt those ethereal and magnetic sympathies on which is founded that mystical affection which attracts us so irresistibly, and which must be so incomprehensible to those

who live beyond the sphere of these inexplicable influences."—

"What the devil does she mean?" said the Prince.

"I dare say she would like to know herself," replied Horace; "for it is fresh translated from the German."

"Sometimes," continues the lady, "after days of ecstacy the feeling which I reciprocate grows suddenly hideous to me, when I see it glowing into an earthly love, hideous because in that character it would be as unnatural as the communion of an embodied with a disembodied spirit, from which an instinctive terror protects the soul whilst still linked to its clay. So that the recollection of a passion—which is mine—responded to by the feeling which seems overpowering you—a passion warm in all its earthly vitality—would be as awful as when a living hand, with its hot, throbbing pulse, grasps the dead, cold, palm of an unreciprocating stiffened corpse! We know that matter does not perish, since from death, which is its great step to transition, life is perpetually springing; we know that our bodies laid in the earth to-day must in the course of time be vivified again, and that, whether their atoms ever, or never, meet again in their present unity, assuredly they will at some time be

parcelled out amongst many animated beings. Is it not thus also with the spirit? In the course of its immortality, may it not pass through innumerable phases, and may it not scatter itself abroad like the vapour of a cloud or the waters of a stream, and unite with the congenial essence, whether fixed in its embodied or wandering in its disembodied state, just as the clay which it has abandoned incorporates itself at length with other bodies already living or which are to be vivified?

"It is thus that I dream, perhaps in madness, —and yet I will not believe I err—that something of that immortal principle breathes in you—at once fascinated and so fatally fascinating—that flash of the eye, that expression of the look, that voice, all immaterial, all motion, a mysterious agency on matter, all reproduced in you as they were long since living. If it were not so, why should you have felt that attractive sympathy, why should my daughter alas, have felt the same, we transmitting somewhat of our soul to our children? Poor Anna! when the unhallowed passion struggles with that mystic love, why can you not transfer it from me to her? You say that love, so far from yielding to our will coerces it—and perhaps it is as well—there would be no horror to me now, like not

daring to recall that which I thought for ever lost to me, and how should I have dared, dear Horace, as my daughter's husband, to invoke the dead as I do by drinking in, in an intoxicating draught, the light of your eyes and the accents of your voice. Poor Anna! it is not your fault and it is not my fault that you do not love her—for you do not love her."

"Certainly not, Madam," said Horace, and then continued reading:

"Why, dear Horace, why do you go so far away, and above all, why do you go with that Isaakoff? From that man will come evil to you—I feel it. To me he is loathsome as a slimy snake. He is like a dead body, which a ghoul or evil spirit has possessed—with the eye still death-like and the heart gnawed away. To-morrow I will tell you a terrible history about him.

"This is complimentary to you," said Horace, laughing. "Your eye is certainly not bright; but the idea of the heart devoured and decayed is very flattering."

"Perhaps she means my liver," replied the Prince; "and if so I am afraid she is right; but on the whole, I think it more complimentary to have such things written of me by a woman like Madame Obrasoff than such a

letter written *to* me. It does not say much for the estimation in which she holds your intellect."

Horace continued:

"As for the lock of hair, I inclose you another since you wish it. Have you lost the first? If so I have been more careful with yours."

"And did you keep the appointment?" inquired the Prince.

"How should I? The letters are dated, you see, Wednesday; and on Thursday morning, as you know, we started. Now, though I really do not understand their drift, these women are both under the impression that they are deceiving me."

"I could hardly have believed it, if I did not see and recognise the writing," replied the Prince. "They would never have dared thus to compromise themselves with a Russian; and I suspect that they have not mended matters by trusting to the discretion of a Frenchman. As far as Madame Obrasoff is concerned, it is clear that you have let her perceive that you know that story of her connexion with the conspiracy; and her curiosity has been piqued to see if she can, notwithstanding, impose on your credulity.

"There is something so disgustingly heartless

in the unblushing manner in which she seeks to take advantage of what should overwhelm her with remorse and shame, that I feel vexed at myself for laughing at an incident which is irresistibly ludicrous in this game of diamond cut diamond. Just imagine then, that those two locks of my hair, which the mother and daughter are respectfully treasuring, or which I have here their written acknowledgement that they are treasuring—which will answer my purpose equally well—are Jakof's."

"Jakof's! impossible!—He wears a wig."

"My dear Isaakoff, I tell you I saw them cut from his own head. I called in upon him as I was going last to Peterhoff. He was under the hands of his French hair-dresser; and as I was loth to waste one of my own curls, I picked up a mesh, which had fallen from the operator's scissors, and divided it between the mystic mother and the artless daughter."

"Oh!" said Isaakoff, laughing as no one had ever seen him laugh before, "this is too ridiculous! Know then, my dear Horace, that Jakof is bald. He does wear a wig; but it is one of his weaknesses to conceal it; he spends a little fortune with that French hair-dresser. He has thirty wigs of progressive lengths, and

inimitably true to nature, from a short Brutus crop, which he puts on when he wishes it thought that he has been sheared, to the long flowing locks which he dons at the end of the month; and if you happen to look at his head suspiciously, it is ten to one if, the first time you go to see him, he does not have his hair snipped before you by the coiffeur, to convince you; and this is what happened on your visit to him."

"Oh! that is too rich!" said Horace. "The idea of Madame Obrasoff and the dainty Miss Anna, treasuring a lock of Jakof's wig."

"The story will run through the capital like wildfire," said the Prince. How do you propose to open their eyes?"

"By answering these two letters and purposely mis-directing that of the mother to the daughter, and *vice versâ*," replied Horace. "I have here wherewith to seal it—a delightful little English seal, a fox seizing a pheasant, and seized by a terrier, with the motto of 'the biter bit.'"

"Oh but the letters, and the hair, and the story of the locks of Jakof's wig?" said the Prince.

"Well really," replied Horace, "I am too good-natured to make full use of the revenge which offers itself. After all, they are a couple of

women; and it would be too bad, however they may deserve it."

"My worthy friend," said the Prince, "your generous men are always egotistical. You make no account of my feelings. The only enjoyments left me are the propagation of a good story, and the pleasure of revenging one's self. I am like the man who shot another for kicking him, and longed to be kicked again to taste the same gratification. Here you have shown me the ill-will of these people, and you put into my hands an instrument for punishing my enemies by treating my friends to a laugh, and unreasonably expect me not to use it.

"It is like giving one an appetite, putting a beccafico on the point of one's fork and then saying, hold! I shall neither return you these letters nor these locks of hair. The former shall be lithographed, and the latter transmitted to Jakof, to whom by rights they belong, as they were given in exchange for his own."

"Well, there is no resisting force," laughed Horace; "but be the remorse and the consequences on your own head."

"Now," said Isaakoff to their solitary attendant, "pull off my stockings, damp my feet, with eau de Cologne, and seek me out a pair of

cooler slippers. And I would advise you, Horace, to undergo the same operation. Then put some more Moselle in ice, and get something which will serve as a fan, and come and fan us." The servitor obeyed. When he had fanned them for nearly half an hour, the Prince made a sign with his hand, and bade him depart.

"I do not like your new valet," said Horace, "though, from his countenance, I should judge him to possess all the honesty that Dimitri wants; and though he serves you with perfect, if with unpractised, intelligence."

"Why do you not like him then?" asked the Prince.

"I do not dislike him as a man, but as a servant," replied Horace. "There is at times an aspect of such hopelessly resigned and passive misery about him, as makes his service painful to one."

"I am sorry," said the Prince "that his service should be painful to you, but I am delighted that it should feel so to him, for he is a slave of mine long spoiled by my father, and to whom I am anxious to give a lesson. Imagine, my dear Horace, when I was put to every imaginable shift on account of the wealth my father squandered on these fellows; imagine my meeting him and suffering from his insolence and pride, without a

hope or prospect of satisfaction or redress, and then suddenly finding that he was the serf and that I the master."

"The deserved retribution" replied Horace, "is strange and dramatic; there is nothing exceeds the insolence of the lacquey, and nothing more amusing than when he unwittingly displays it against his master — but whatever he may be morally, he is a magnificent animal."

"And then," observed the Prince, "he has a sister in the village to which we are proceeding, who is singularly beautiful—so beautiful as to have attracted the enthusiastic attention of a celebrated artist in my father's time."

"What, is she—a peasant girl.?"

"Not exactly: from what I can hear, for her beauty tempted my father to lavish on her many accomplishments—for instance, like her brother, she speaks French as well as you or I."

"I should be delighted to hear so," said Horace "if I did not remember that you are only speaking from hearsay."

"Yes !" replied Isaakoff, "but such hearsay as may be relied upon. I will warrant you that she is a charming creature ; and before I have seen her I will change her for your grey horse."

"What! change my horse Lucifer for any of

the sex, known—much less unknown?" said the Count. "Is she like her brother?"

"Upon my word I do not know, they have not met for some years; but whether like him or not, they say that she is singularly handsome. She has been as well brought up as if she were my own relative."

"Do you know," said Horace "that you make me long to step into the place of the brother."

"Nothing in the world," replied Isakoff, "could be easier. If you have ever read the Memoirs of Madame Du Barri, you must remember the history which the Duke de Richelieu relates of his once disguising himself as one of his own servants, on a similar occasion:—supposing you were to do so now?"

"What!" said Horace, "I play the valet, and make your new valet play the gentleman? Upon my word, the idea is very original, and not unpromising: when it is to result in my being clasped in the arms, and smothered by the unsuspicious kisses of this phœnix of sisters!"

"Suppose you adopt it, my Don Juan."

"I should ask no better, were it not for two fatal objections. In the first place, the sister would discover, if only by my ignorance of the Russ, that I was not her brother: in the next

the brother would not readily consent to my representing him."

"As to your first objection," said Isaakoff, "I learned by a letter which casually came under my eye, that my slave Mattvei always corresponds in French with his sister to elude the inquisitiveness of my land-steward, so that she may reasonably conclude, if you address her in that language that her brother chooses to speak no other to her: and as to the second, I beg you to believe that our Russian serfs have no will of their own, in opposition to their masters."

Outside the thin partition which divided the inner from the outer chamber of the post-house, the slave was watching: he was obliged to be within hearing when his master clapped his hands to summon him, and thus overheard the foregoing conversation; and as he heard, his head sank despondingly upon his ample breast.

END OF VOL. II.

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